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The Wife of the First Term Enlisted Soldier:  
A Study of Socialization and Role

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a study of wives of first-term enlisted soldiers at two Army posts (Fort Grant and Fort Winston). The research method consisted of personal semi-structured interviews with each respondent covering a wide range of topics: attitudes toward the Army and military life; husband's service; role of the Army wife; background data; family status; employment status; housing and community; general well being; problems; social support.

Approximately one year after the initial research, respondents were reinterviewed by telephone; a total of 34 women (over 77% of the original sample) were reached. The reinterview focuses on change, in terms of life events, adjustment and general well being. The reinterviews demonstrate an ongoing and fairly successful pattern of adaptation for most of the wives.

The following summary refers to the initial interviews. Data on the reinterviews are described in the last section of the summary.

### Demographic Characteristics of First Term Wives

Most of the wives are married to men in the lower enlisted ranks; three-quarters are E1's through E4's.

In general, the respondents are young: over two-thirds are under 25 and only two women are over 30.

About two-thirds of the women have children; the majority of these have one child. A substantial group (7) were pregnant at the time of the first interview.

The majority are high school graduates (almost 60%) while most of the remainder have had at least some college training. Only six women are not high school graduates.

The majority of respondents grew up in working class families and represent all parts of the country.

In terms of ethnic origin, most of the women are white (nearly 80%) but the group includes seven Blacks, three Hispanics, one Asiatic and one native American.

The majority (over two-thirds) are currently not employed. Among those who work, most are engaged in baby sitting in their own homes. The majority, however, do plan to work at some time in the future.

### Attitudes toward Military Life

Over half of the respondents have positive attitudes toward military life but only a few (8) are enthusiastic. The remainder are either ambivalent or mildly dissatisfied while very few (2) are extremely unhappy.

Over half favor their husbands making the Army a career; twelve are negative and the remainder indicate it is their husband's decision.

Attitudes toward military life and toward a career in the Army are highly correlated. Very few women show inconsistent attitudes.

### Role of the Army Wife

Most of the respondents do not have any clearly defined perception of the "role" of the Army wife in terms of expected behaviors.

The minority who do respond on this subject tend to define the role in terms of behavior or attitudes toward their husbands, e.g., support, patience, tolerance, etc.

The idea of expected behavior arouses resentment among some Army wives who perceive this as a violation of norms of individuality or equality (e.g., behavior toward people of higher ranks.)

### Housing and Community

Over half of the respondents (25) live on post, 21 at Fort Grant and 4 at Fort Winston. At the latter post, the remainder divide equally between trailer parks and apartments or town houses in town.

Most respondents are mildly positive about their housing while few are either enthusiastic or very dissatisfied. Many (especially those in trailer parks) perceive their current housing as temporary and expect to obtain better quarters in the near future.

The majority of women (over two-thirds) have favorable attitudes toward their neighbors and community with only a few expressing strong negative feelings.

Interpersonal relations are the major source of both positive and negative feelings about the community. Women cite friendliness and helpfulness as positive factors while unfriendliness, untrustworthiness, aggression are cited negatively.

### Husband's MOS and Conditions of Work

Husbands are found both in combat and combat support units. At Fort Grant, all are in support units, chiefly medical, engineering and military police. At Fort Winston, over half are in the infantry and artillery.

Most of the husbands work a "normal" week in terms of hours, i.e., 40 - 50 hours per week. The remainder work over 50 hours per week and four average 60 hours and over.

Over two-thirds are in the field at least several times a year for periods which average several days to one week.

Wives generally react negatively to field duty, citing frequent reactions of loneliness, fear and boredom. Negative reactions are clearly related to frequency and length of field duty.

Many wives accept field duty as part of military life and a small minority (10%) find an occasional separation of benefit to the marital relationship.

### Major Problems of First Term Wives

About one-quarter of the respondents are judged to have serious problems in their lives and about one-third are experiencing some or moderate problems.

Problems are most likely to focus on marriage, finances, social relations and husbands' work.

Most women experiencing problems tend to be optimistic, believing that these will improve or be solved in the future. This optimism is particularly characteristic in the area of finances.

### General Well Being

On a scale measuring General Well Being (scores ranging from a low of 0 to a high of 110), the mean score for first term wives is 68.8 while the median is 69.5.

Respondents judged to have serious problems tended to fall into the lowest third of scores on the GWB scale.

Among those with lowest general well being, several were experiencing specific situational problems or other life events at the time of the interview (e.g., difficult pregnancy, family health problems, marital discord).

## Social Support and Adjustment

Although a number of support agencies operate on both posts, almost 40% of the respondents report no initial support or welcome on their arrival.

Respondents describe the following types of "official" support on entry to the post: unit help (6); visitor to home (4); orientation classes or tours (5). In addition, eighteen women received some kind of orientation literature.

The major source of support for the first term wife is her husband. Neighbors and friends are the second most frequently cited support source. A small minority of wives describe a mentor relationship with an older or more experienced military wife; this appears to be the most effective type of support both in terms of instrumental and emotional factors.

Although most wives apparently develop informal sources of support (usually rooted in the neighborhood and, occasionally, in the unit), they feel that the Army could have helped considerably in their initial adjustment problems. The need for instrumental support (e.g., learning where things are, whom to call, etc.) is mentioned most frequently. Orientation classes, tours, etc. are seen as the most effective way to provide this type of support.

## One Year Later - Reinterviews

In the year between interviews, the majority of respondents who were recontacted experienced one or more life events. Two-thirds moved, six of them to overseas locations; two husbands left the Army; eight women had babies and six more were awaiting babies at the time of the reinterview; and three marriages were dissolved or were in the process of dissolution.

Other changes during the year included shifts in employment status (over half of the respondents); promotion of husbands (almost half); reenlistment (4); and leaving Army (3, including a divorced couple).

Attitudes toward the Army and toward military life show little change; the majority of wives are still mildly positive.

Similarly, the role of the Army wife remains unclear to most wives. Where they perceive a role, it tends to be defined in terms of support and understanding of the soldier spouse.

Nearly half of the respondents report that their lives have improved during the last year. Major reasons for their greater life satisfaction include birth of a baby or pregnancy; overseas experience; improved marital relationship; development of friendships; and move to a new and better residence.

Among the remainder, the majority (ten respondents) say there has been no change in terms of life satisfaction; most of these women were at least moderately happy at the time of the initial interview.

The final group describe their lives as either chaotic (6) or worse (2). These women cite factors such as marital stress or breakup (2); an unpleasant overseas tour (1); financial and other stresses upon leaving the Army (1); or a specific traumatic event.

In terms of social support, husband and family are still important but there is increasing reliance on friends, neighbors and unit. Respondents are now more knowledgeable about formal military sources of support but tend to use them mostly for crises or serious problems.

Generally, respondents feel they are coping satisfactorily with military life. They attribute their improved lives to experience and to their greater understanding of and tolerance for some of the difficulties of military life.



## OBJECTIVE

This research study is titled The Wife of the First Term Enlisted Soldier: A Study of Socialization and Role. The major objective of the research is to gain some insight into the socialization of the new army wife into her role as a military wife, her adjustment, major problems and coping strategies. In a practical sense, we are interested in finding out what the military can do to improve the life of the first term wife. The basic assumptions underlying this research are as follows:

1. The socialization and adjustment of the wife to army life are crucial to the well-being of the family.
2. Her adjustment has an influence on the duty performance of the soldier and his value in the unit.
3. Her adjustment is also an important factor in future career plans of the soldier, i.e., his retention in the army.
4. In the event of deployment, her adjustment and ability to handle stress is critical both for herself, the family and her husband.

## METHODOLOGY

The initial phases of the research were essentially exploratory. A literature review of military families revealed almost no data on the first term wife. In fact, research on wives and families focused on effects of separation, moving, and other special problems of military life. Material on the role of the army wife was sparse, tended to deal with officers' wives and was generally out-of-date.

We also reviewed much of the basic research and theory on stress and coping which suggested that the new military wife is a particularly vulnerable individual in terms of stress. She is usually experiencing a number of life transitions simultaneously (e.g., marriage, parenthood, geographical mobility) while at the same time is relinquishing her usual sources of support such as family and friends. She may also, in view of her youth and inexperience, lack intellectual and social coping resources. The literature on military wives and families does focus on stress of certain events as described above but not on the problems and stress of simply entering the military community.

The second part of the exploratory phase consisted in interviewing first term army wives. We used two local posts, obtaining the initial list of names from the Army Community Services. This, of course, introduced some bias as these consisted of families that had come to the attention of ACS, i.e., those with some problems. However, we also asked each

respondent for names of other wives and reached others in that way. The initial interviews were unstructured, essentially asking the respondent to identify areas of stress and methods of adaptation. At first, we also interviewed the husband (the enlisted soldier) if he was available. The interviews gradually developed into a semi-structured form as we found that it was necessary to ask questions; for most respondents, it was difficult to obtain information by simply asking them to talk about their lives as first term wives. We also decided to omit the interview with the husbands as it introduced many complications in research design and method. If both husband and wife were present, it was difficult to do an independent interview with either. Furthermore, the interaction revealed by interviews with both spouses would involve complex analysis, not directly relevant to the objective of this study (although a subject of great interest and importance).

The final instrument developed after about a dozen exploratory interviews can be described as semi-structured: there are a series of questions but no pre-categorized responses. In addition, the wording and order are occasionally varied for particular respondents. Probes are asked where necessary and there is ample opportunity for the respondent to express her own feelings, attitudes, etc. without regard for particular questions. The only exceptions to this format are three scales: self esteem, locus of control and general well being (GWB). The first two require Agree-Disagree responses while the GWB scale presents a number of categories from which to choose. The interview schedule includes questions on the following topic areas:

1. General attitudes to Army and military life
2. Husband's service
3. Perceptions of role of military wife
4. Personal background
5. Current family
6. Employment
7. Housing
8. Community
9. General well being (includes three scales)
10. Coping with problems
11. Social support

These data were collected through personal interviews, lasting between 1 and 2 hours after being arranged beforehand by phone or by personal contact where there was no phone.

Early in the procedure, we decided to limit the study to "traditional" families, i.e., those with a military husband and a civilian wife. This was done for two reasons: this is still the modal family type; we also wanted to eliminate the variables and complexities introduced by alternate family types such as the dual military career couple, the single military parent and the female soldier with civilian husband.

## A. FORT GRANT

### SAMPLE

The first site for this research is a medium-sized army post on the East Coast located about half way between two metropolitan areas. Despite this location, the geographic area around the post is semi-rural, currently in transition as the suburbs of the two cities expand. The immediate area around the post consists of some rural areas interspersed with commercial development such as small shopping centers, gas stations and innumerable convenience stores and fast food restaurants. The general appearance of these areas is one of non-planning with consequent disorderly and disorganized effects. The post itself is generally pleasant with many green areas, a spacious look and an appearance of being well maintained. There are no combat arms troops on this post so that all respondents are wives of soldiers in support units. (In a future extension of this research, wives of combat arms troops at another site will be interviewed.)

We were already familiar with the post as several exploratory interviews had been administered there. However, we did not want to obtain respondents' names from any support agency such as ACS in order to avoid the bias introduced by that method. Consequently, we obtained the names of all first term married enlisted men in the first two years of their enlistment; this limitation was introduced so that we could reinterview respondents while their husbands were still in the Army. The names were obtained from the Military Personnel Office and included the soldier's company. However, it did not include home addresses and phone numbers. These were obtained either by contacting the soldier at work, through the local phone directory or by calling phone information to obtain numbers for those who had come very recently. Most respondents were identified through this list. In addition, we asked each respondent to identify other first term wives. Most of these also appeared on the list; in total, only two respondents' names were not obtained from Personnel lists.

The initial contact was made through a telephone call in which the study was explained and an appointment for an interview arranged. Most respondents agreed easily although a few had to think it over or discuss it with their husbands. There were only two refusals; these were immediate, before the study was described and were obviously final. Some respondents were hard to reach, particularly those who work and had to be called in the evenings or on weekends. In other cases, phones were disconnected, usually indicating that the family had been transferred.

After a number of interviews it was apparent that we were reaching very few Black respondents. The reason for this is not clear as we were simply going through the list of names which did not have any obvious bias in terms of race. We thought that

possibly more Blacks worked or did not have phones, making them difficult to reach. We thus did contact some working wives who turned out to be white; we did reach one Black respondent who did not have a phone by contacting her neighbor whom we had interviewed. Finally, we asked the Personnel Office if they could identify Black first termers and thus were able to obtain a list from which we completed the interviews.

The final sample totals 24 wives of first term enlisted men in support units all stationed at the post described above. This is not a probability sample and for this reason, as well as the small size of the sample, we cannot generalize the results to the population of first term enlisted soldiers' wives. However, we did reach a varied group (see section below on demographics) and we did gain a good deal of knowledge and insight into the nature of their lives, their problems and effectiveness of coping. We also learned what the Army has done for them, what it has failed to do and what they would like it to do.

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

By definition, the sample consists of wives of lower-rank enlisted men, distributed as follows:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Frequency*</u>
E 2	3
E 3	9
E 4	11
E 5	1

\*Unless otherwise stated, all figures represent absolute numbers and the total N = 24.

The enlisted men are found in the following type of companies:

<u>Type of Company</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Medical	9
Engineering	8
Military Police	4
USAG (Adjutant)	2
Satellite Commun.	1

As indicated earlier, all are support units. A variety of specific jobs are represented in this group, including MP's, mechanics, repairmen, food specialist, medical aide, writer and legal aide.

The great majority of the respondents live in military housing: 21 live in post housing while three live off the post in nearby developments (the farthest is about 8 miles away). Of the 21 on post, 20 live in a single housing area which we will call Read Hill - this consists of "inadequate" housing which means there is no air conditioning, dishwasher or washing machine. The area is made of of small apartment buildings, each containing 4 or 6 apartments. Some are built around a courtyard, while others face the street. There are only about four streets in the entire area making it a compact and clearly delimited neighborhood. One major street does run through the area and divides the community into two sections. Driving through in pleasant weather, there are usually women sitting on the steps talking, children bicycling, people walking to the laundromat, etc. The buildings look somewhat rundown (many are currently being renovated) and the grassy areas are not well maintained in many cases. They are the responsibility of the residents and although maintenance coordinators are supposed to oversee this, there is obviously wide variation in enforcement. Maintenance is a source of considerable discontent among the wives who frequently complain about the way the neighborhood is maintained and the failure to get repairs done in a reasonable time period.

One respondent in post housing lives in a different community of town houses which are in much better condition and in a very attractive setting. This respondent has a large family and thus has rated larger quarters. The three respondents off post live in three different communities (one very close to the post, the others within 8 miles); two are in apartments while one occupies a town house. All are considerably more attractive than Read Hill and include amenities such as air conditioning and dishwashers. In summary, the typical respondent lives in an apartment consisting of a living room-dining area, a kitchen, bath and one to three bedrooms, depending on the size of the

family. The apartment living areas are quite spacious and despite the "inadequate" classification, they are reasonably nice apartments. However, the public areas such as stairways and corridors are badly maintained - they are conspicuously dirty, shabby and generally depressing. A few respondents have apartments with separate entrances on the side of the building; these have a feeling of privacy and of being a separate dwelling.

The first term wife tends to be very young. The age range is from 17 through 28, with the following distribution:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
19 and under	9
20 through 24	11
25 and over	4

As might be expected from their youth, most have been married for a relatively short time. Four were married within the last year, an additional ten have been married between one and two years, seven have been married between two and five years while only three are married over six years.

They divide fairly evenly between those with and without children, as follows:

<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
None	11
One	6
Two	3
Three	3
Four	0
Five	1

Three are currently pregnant, two expecting their first child, another expecting her second (and possibly third as twins are suspected). One mother of three does not have her children living with her but is included above under the category "three."

In terms of racial/ethnic background, three-quarters (18) are white, one is Latino (white), three are Black and there is one Asiatic and one Native American. This is probably an underrepresentation of minorities, especially Blacks, a problem

observed in other research on military families. The respondents come from all parts of the country, although the majority are from the south and midwest.

<u>Region of Origin</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Northeast	4
Midwest	7
South	8
West	2
Areas outside Continental U.S.	3

The majority grew up in small towns or small cities (15), while only 3 come from rural areas and 6 from city, suburbs or metropolitan areas.

With regard to education, the modal category is high school graduate - 13 have finished high school, two of these through GED's. Five did not finish high school while an equal number have gone beyond high school - three have some college and two have had other training. One is a college graduate and has also had graduate training.

The socio-economic background of most respondents (based on parents' occupations) is working class as the following table indicates:

<u>SES (Family of Origin)</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Underclass (unstable, marginal occupations, unemployed)	3
Working class (factory worker, truckdriver, etc.)	11
Middle class (teacher, store owner, skilled worker)	8
Upper middle (professional)	2

The majority of the respondents are not employed at the present time. Only eight are currently employed and two additional respondents just left their jobs due to pregnancy or

other personal reasons for a total of 10. (A third had also left her job relatively recently because of pregnancy.) Of this total of ten currently or very recently employed, eight are employed full time while two do baby sitting either part time or sporadically. Among those working full time, three are involved in either day care or babysitting. Thus, a total of five care for children in their own home while five have jobs outside the home. These jobs include cashier, saleswoman, skilled craftsman and one semi-professional position. The table below sums up the employment status of women with and without children. (We have included the two respondents who are leaving jobs as "employed" while the respondent whose children are not living with her is classified under "no children.")

#### Employment Status of Women with and without Children

<u>Children</u>		<u>No Children</u>	
Employed	Not Employed	Employed	Not Employed
4	10	6	4

It may be surprising that the majority do not work and are not looking for work. Of the fourteen who are not employed, only three indicate that they are seeking work. Moreover, fully half of those employed are working in their own homes caring for children. At first, we thought we might be reaching only women who are easily accessible at home (i.e., not working outside the home). However, we made special efforts to reach working women by calling on evenings and weekends and by asking each respondent if she knew any working first term wives. We came to the tentative conclusion that for various reasons (e.g., lack of skills, limited work experience, lack of knowledge about jobs in the area, desire to be home when husband is not working, fear of returning home late at night), the majority do not work and that even among those with no children, nearly half are not employed.

#### GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD MILITARY LIFE

All respondents were asked an introductory question at the start of the interview: "...how are you finding life as an Army wife?" Although the interview goes into considerable detail as to specific aspects of army life (e.g., husband's work conditions, housing, neighborhood, etc.), this initial question is a good indicator of overall feelings. The results are summed up in the following table:



<u>General Attitude</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Enthusiastic, enjoying it, etc.	4
O.K.; satisfied	8
Equivocal; not sure	3
Life is hard; dissatisfied	7
Life is miserable; very unhappy	2

We can see that the sample divides fairly evenly; half are positive about army life, nine are negative and the rest are not sure. Few respondents fall into the extreme categories, either on the positive or negative end.

These general attitudes are reflected in feelings about making the Army a career.

<u>Attitude toward Army as a Career</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Yes (may be qualified)	12
2. No	7
3. Don't know; up to him; ambivalent	5

The qualifications among the positive group usually take the form of stating "if all goes well," "if things continue as they are," etc.

Although these frequencies (on general attitudes and feelings about retention) appear fairly consistent, we want to examine if, in fact, individual first term wives are consistent on these two sets of attitudes. We find that on the whole they are. The following table presents attitudes on the two variables: a positive attitude is indicated by +, negative by - and an ambivalent or don't know response by a ?

### Feelings about Life as an Army Wife

<u>Army as a Career</u>	Positive		Negative		Ambivalent	
Favor	++	11	+-	0	?+	1
Oppose	+-	0	--	5	?-	2
Ambivalent	++	1	-?	4	??	0

We can see that of the twelve wives who feel positive toward military life, 11 also favor the army as a career while one is ambivalent (actually, in this one case, she is mildly positive toward military life and leaves the career decision to her husband). Of the nine who are negative in their general attitude, five do not favor the Army as a career while four are either ambivalent or leave the decision to their husbands. Finally, among the group of three who are not clear in their overall attitude, one favors a career in the Army while two do not. We can see at a glance that there are no cases that are clearly inconsistent (positive in attitude, negative toward a career or vice-versa). The inconsistent respondents (7) are all either ambivalent toward military life, toward the Army as a career or leave the decision to their husbands. These data indicate that a wife's attitude toward her life in the military clearly affects her feelings about her husband remaining in the Army.

### PERSONALITY VARIABLES

The interview schedule includes three scales, all dealing with factors associated with individual personality and affect. These were administered near the end of the interview when the respondent was usually at ease and talking freely about herself. Despite the total length of the scales, not a single respondent refused to answer or failed to complete the items.

The first scale consists of a 6-item series measuring self esteem, the individual's global evaluation of herself, either positively or negatively (Rosenberg, 1968). Responses are in terms of agree-disagree to a series of statements about oneself. Statements indicating high self esteem are given a score of 1, others are zero, so that the total scores range from 0 - 6. (Some items are phrased positively, others negatively). This is a widely used well-validated scale; in most studies, scores tend to be skewed toward high self esteem and this is true of the present sample as seen in the table below.

<u>Self Esteem Score</u>		<u>Frequency</u>
Low	0	-
	1	-
	2	1
	3	4
	4	2
	5	9
High	6	8

We see that the modal category is 5 which represents fairly high self esteem compared with other populations on which the scale has been used. Only five respondents score below 4.

The Mastery Scale (Pearlin, 1978) is an indicator of perceived internal vs. external control, i.e., to what extent the individual feels she has control over her life' and what happens to her. It is also stated in terms of agree-disagree with a score of one assigned to each "internal" locus of control response. The range of scores for the seven-item scale is 0 - 7. Once again, responses are skewed in the direction of internal control.

<u>Mastery Score</u>		<u>Frequency</u>
High ext .	0	-
	1	1
	2	1
	3	3
	4	2
	5	4
	6	5
High int.	7	8

The modal category here is 7, indicating high internal locus of control; nearly two-thirds of the respondents fall into the upper group, scores 5 to 7 on this scale.

We may find it surprising that this group of women scores so high on both of these scales. It should be noted that self concept theory suggests that the self concept (including self esteem) is developed through interaction with significant others and thus it is the personal social context of the individual that is crucial, rather than socio-demographic factors such as race, gender, social class, etc. With regard to locus of control, we may find the results more puzzling since these are individuals living in a military context which presumably has authority over many aspects of their lives. We can only speculate at this point; it is possible that locus of control depends more on internal feelings and perceptions than on objective reality. It is also possible that the married soldier and his wife at this post live their personal lives somewhat apart from the military and perceive these aspects of life as separate.

The final scale is an 18-item General Well Being measure (DuPuy, 1978) which is an indicator of general affect, health, depression, feelings of strain, etc. during the past month. The possible range of scores is from 0 through 110 with the higher scores indicating greater well being. The scores of first term wives ranged from a low of 26 to a high of 104 with the following distribution.

<u>General Well Being Score</u>		<u>Frequency</u>
Low GWB	Under 30	1
	31 - 60	7
	61 - 75	9
	76 - 90	4
High GWB	91 and higher	3

The mean score is 68.4 and the median = 69. The scores are slightly skewed in the upper direction, a tendency usually observed with respect to this scale.

The table above shows the overall results for the General Well Being Scale. However, in a small sample such as this, we can also look at each individual case. The chart below presents the results for each respondents on all three scales. In addition, we have indicated whether the respondent has serious problems in her life. This observation is a subjective one, determined by the interviewer on the basis of the total interview, perception of the respondent, affect during the interview, etc. It must be emphasized that this evaluation was made independent of the scale scores which were not computed until long after the interviews occurred. The respondents are listed in descending order on the GWB scale; an asterisk indicates that in the interviewer's judgment, this respondent has serious problems; the nature of the problems is not included here.

RESPONDENT	GWB	SELF ESTEEM	MASTERY	PROBLEMS
1	104	6	7	None
2	97	3	7	Minor
3	96	6	7	None
4	90	6	7	None
5	90	5	6	Minor
6	87	6	7	Moderate
7	81	5	7	Moderate
8	75	5	7	None
9	74	6	7	Moderate
10	74	6	5	*Serious
11	73	3	1	None
12	70	6	6	Minor
13	68	4	5	?Moderate**
14	66	4	4	Moderate
15	65	3	2	*Serious
16	65	6	6	Minor
17	58	5	6	*Serious
18	55	5	3	Moderate
19	52	5	3	*Serious
20	47	2	5	*Serious
21	46	5	4	*Serious
22	43	5	5	Minor
23	40	5	3	*Serious
24	26	3	6	*Serious

\*\* ? indicates interviewer was unsure of evaluation; problems may be serious.

We can see at a glance that of the eight respondents judged to have serious problems, six fall into the lowest third on the GWB scores and a seventh is in the lower half. The GWB score does identify those individuals undergoing some kind of severe stress or problem at the present time. It should be noted that the respondent with the lowest GWB score, 26, was experiencing a severe marital crisis at the time of the interview. It should further be noted that two of the respondents with serious problems showed possible signs of mental disturbance, in the opinion of the interviewer. In a later section, we will describe some of the major stresses and problems of this sample.

With regard to self esteem and mastery scores, the association with serious problems and/or general well being is less clearcut. Generally, those with high GWB scores tend to have higher self esteem and sense of mastery but there are exceptions (R #2 , e.g.) while some respondents with low GWB may be relatively high on either of the other scores (e.g., R # 24, 22 and 17). However, there is a general consistency among the three scores and extent of problems experienced by the individual. Some of the inconsistencies relate to the unique circumstances of the individual's life.

#### TYPES OF PROBLEMS

We judged a total of eight respondents to have serious problems in their lives while an additional six had some problems. The table below sums up the nature of the major problems among respondents with serious or some problems. These add up to more than the total of 14 respondents since a number of women (particularly those with serious problems) are experiencing multiple stressors.

<u>Type of Problem</u>	<u>Serious</u>	<u>Moderate</u>
Marital	4	1
Social Relations	3	3
Finances	3	1
Husband's problems with Army	3	-
Health (self or family member)	2	2

Marital problems lead the list of serious problems. In one case, a crisis was occurring at the time of the interview; another has a history of marital discord; and in two cases, the husbands are perceived as cutting the wives out of their lives. Problems relating to social relations take either of two forms: social

isolation (no friends and little interaction) or distrust of others due to some negative experience(s). Husband's problems with army usually involves perceived unfairness of treatment and in one case, an apparent suicide attempt. The two respondents who are possibly mentally disturbed manifested multiple problems representing nearly all categories except marital. In both cases, the marital relationship represents a source of stability and mutual support to the respondent.

Respondents judged to have some, but not serious, problems show the same type of stresses as the first group. However, either the problems are not as severe or the individual seems to have better coping resources. Usually, she takes the view that her problems are not permanent. For example, the one case of a marital problem in this group involves some conflict over the husband's army duties; the respondent feels she needs to develop greater patience and understanding and believes she is doing so. Financial problems are perceived as temporary and soluble with either time or better management.

The remaining ten respondents report either no or minor problems: these relate to issues such as money, jobs, medical care, homesickness but they are clearly not major sources of stress in the individual's life.

The problems described above reflect issues volunteered by the respondent in answer to a questions about "parts of your life causing problems at the present time" and, as such, probably are the major stresses in her life. In cases where stresses are particularly severe, problems emerged throughout the interview. The interview also includes specific questions about different areas of life such as housing, neighbors and community, husband's conditions of work, finances, etc. Consequently, we can observe satisfaction or dissatisfaction with different life domains.

## 1. Finances

We asked each respondent a series of questions dealing with money management and stress related to money. The results show a fairly even split with 11 stating that money is a problem (with some variation in degree of severity) and 13 indicating that it is not a problem. Whether money is a problem does not appear to be related to employment status of the respondent. Among those for whom it is a problem, five are employed (one part time) and six are not working. The non-problem group also includes five employed women and eight who are not working. Five respondents indicate that money problems have a negative effect on their marriage (although in two cases, the marriages manifest multiple problems). Finally, most women are optimistic about their money problems. Of the eleven reporting such problems, eight expect things to improve in the future while the remaining three say they do not know.

It may be surprising that more women do not report money problems. These are wives of lower level enlisted men with relatively low incomes. We do not find any association between employment status of the women and perception of money problems, although clearly those who are working enjoy higher incomes. Possibly the explanation lies in expectations. The majority of respondents come from lower socio-economic backgrounds; moreover, a number describe job instability or unemployment as the major reason their husbands enlisted. In terms of things they like about military life, many mention benefits and security. Medical benefits are most frequently mentioned and indications are that they are used and, despite some complaints, appreciated by wives. Thus, Army wives may not feel economically deprived since military life represents an economic improvement over their earlier experiences. Furthermore, they are living in a community of people with similar incomes so that they do not feel deprived compared to others. A final indication of the importance of expectations is shown in two cases of women who had just or recently left their jobs and who were either experiencing or anticipating money problems because of their loss of income. These data, while not definitive, certainly suggest that perception and expectation may be more important than objective factors with regard to money problems. We should further add that several respondents indicate that their money problems were produced by their own mismanagement.

## 2. Housing

The interview includes a number of questions relating to current housing, satisfaction with it and opinions about military housing in general. The table below presents the current housing picture for the 24 respondents: how many live on or off the post; what type of housing units they occupy.

Current Housing of First Term Wives

	<u>On Post</u>		<u>Off Post</u>
	<u>Read Hill</u>	<u>Other</u>	
Apartment	20	0	2
Town House	0	1	1

The great majority of respondents live on post in the same community; all of these live in apartments. The only respondent on post in a different community occupies a town house (she also has the largest family and the largest living unit with four



bedrooms). The three women off post live in different communities, one very close to the post, the other two about eight miles away.

The figures below show the size of the units occupied by respondents. It should be pointed out that in Read Hill, most of the units are identical except for the number of bedrooms.

<u>Size of Unit</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1 bedroom	8
2 bedrooms	13
3 bedrooms	2
4 bedrooms	1

As indicated above, the four-bedroom unit is a town house on post occupied by a family with five children. Most of the one-bedroom units are occupied by couples with no children while those with one and two children have two-bedroom units. (A few childless couples also have two-bedroom apartments.)

The great majority (19 women) indicate satisfaction with their housing; four are dissatisfied and one apparently has no opinion. The degree of satisfaction expressed by most is tepid; "OK" is a common summation of their attitudes. Only three respondents indicate any real enthusiasm for their housing and two of these live in off-post housing.

We also asked respondents to describe things they like and things they don't like about their current housing. Positive statements include the following (figure in parentheses indicates the number who mention this factor): size, spaciousness (3); quiet, privacy (3, one off-post and one in an apartment with a separate entrance); comfort (2). Ease of care and free rent are also mentioned. Certain advantages are indicated only by women living off post: air conditioning, security, well-kept grounds, and adequate service. Finally, one respondent stated that her apartment is "not bad compared to others."

The negative factor mentioned most often is lack of space (8). It is interesting that three women indicate spaciousness as a positive factor, suggesting the importance of past experience or expectations; an individual raised in a trailer may react differently to a two-bedroom apartment compared to one who previously lived in a private house. Other negative features cited are bugs, roaches (3); inadequate or slow repairs and service (3); noise from neighbors due to poor construction (2); and poor maintenance of grounds (2). Others mention too many stairs, lack of air conditioning and once again, expectations (e.g., "I expected better"). Respondents off post mention high

rent, lack of security and distance from post.

Finally, we asked respondents to express their general opinion of military housing and found the group fairly evenly divided. Twelve are positive although of these, only four express any enthusiasm while eight say it is "OK" or "not bad." An additional four seem ambivalent while eight are negative (two of the latter live off post, explaining that this is the reason they do so). Comments tend to be negative with respondents mentioning dirt, roaches, inadequate repairs, general poor appearance, shoddy construction and lack of space. The importance of expectations is again evidenced in the fact that some say military housing is better than they expected while others state they expected better or it could be better.

In summary, we can say that these first term wives, while not enthusiastic, are not seriously dissatisfied with their housing. It should further be noted that Read Hill is undergoing renovation at the present time so that some of the negative factors cited may be improved. Furthermore, for a sizable minority of respondents, the perception is that current housing is not permanent; they expect to move to larger or better quarters or to move to another post or overseas.

In a final question, respondents were asked what their ideal housing would be; about two-thirds indicate that they want a single family dwelling while the remainder split fairly evenly between a town house or an apartment. The general optimism of these young women is seen in the fact that most expect to achieve their desired housing.

### 3. Neighbors and Community

Initially, the interview included separate questions on neighbors and community, asking the following:

"On the whole, how do you like your neighbors?"

"What are the things you like about them?"

"What are the things you don't like?"

"On the whole, how do you like the community?"

"What are the things you like?"

"What are the things you don't like?"

After several interviews, it was apparent that respondents did not distinguish neighbors, neighborhood and community and the two questions were combined. We found that the interview proceeded more smoothly and elicited the same type of data. The analysis below combines the two subjects.

The table below shows the general attitude of respondents to neighbors and community.

<u>Attitude to Neighbors and Community</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Positive	
Like them	13
OK; fair	5
Don't know; no opinion	5
Negative	1

Three-quarters of the sample express positive attitudes toward neighbors and community; however, of these, five are less than enthusiastic, generally indicating that they get along and/or have no serious problems or complaints. Most of those with no opinion indicate that they are too new in the community and have not met many people as yet. Only one respondent is clearly negative with regard to neighbors and community.

In terms of things they like, respondents usually mention interpersonal factors such as friendliness and helpfulness. These responses often refer to specific neighbors who have been friendly or offered assistance. One woman indicates she likes being in a community where everyone is in the same situation while another likes the fact that people mind their own business.

Although most respondents are at least moderately favorable in their general attitude toward neighbors and community, they tend to identify things they don't like more often than things they like. (This is consistent with our general experience that people with problems talk more than others and that respondents are more apt to discuss problems than positive aspects of their lives.) The negative factors can be divided into two categories: those related to interpersonal relations and those referring to the general community. Among the former, "unfriendly or untrustworthy neighbors" are cited most often; loudness, fighting and gossip among community members are also mentioned as is wild behavior among children in the neighborhood. Respondents often refer to specific incidents such as neighbors complaining to authorities about them, experiences of "being used" by neighbors, failure of neighbors to respond to friendly overtures, etc. Community factors center about safety (e.g., robberies, vandalism, fear of walking about at night) and appearance (e.g., poor maintenance of outside areas, dogs roaming around) while only one respondent mentions parking problems. It is noteworthy that most of the fears about safety refer to rumors, rather than experience, of the respondent or her friends.

We also asked respondents if they feel that they are part of the community or whether they feel separate from it. We find that only nine identify with the community while thirteen feel separate and two do not know. The reasons for feeling apart most often relate to time: either being too new or not having enough time to spend in the community; the latter is cited usually by women who work full time. About ten of the respondents who do not identify with the community cite "time" factors. The other three mention either negative feelings toward the army or to their neighbors as reasons for "not belonging."

We have seen that most women feel at least moderately favorable toward their neighbors and community. We also want to know the extent of their interaction with neighbors, whether they have made friends in the community and who these friends are. The table below presents figures on the extent of contact with neighbors among the respondents.

<u>Extent of Contact with Neighbors</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Considerable contact (e.g., visits, help, joint activities)	10
Some contact (chatting, occasional visits)	7
Little contact (greetings only)	7

Most respondents have at least some contact with their neighbors beyond merely saying hello. It is consistent that about seventeen respondents indicate they have friends in the neighborhood. Among those who do not, two are recent arrivals, one has made friends with a woman at work who lives outside the area and one had friends who have moved away. Thus, the majority of respondents have at least one friend in the area. Among the small group who have no friends, two cite the pain of losing friends who move away, one clearly has had difficult social experiences and only one specifically states she does not want to make friends in the community because she has nothing in common with the other women and values her privacy.

The majority of friendships are with wives of other enlisted men, either in the neighborhood or in the unit (in a number of cases, neighborhood friends are also unit wives). Fourteen respondents have friends who are enlisted men's wives while only three are friends with NCO wives. It is perhaps noteworthy that none of the women has any friends among officers' wives; in fact, very few have ever met an officer's wife. Several (3) have also gotten to know military women who live in the neighborhood. Finally, a small group have friends outside the military community, either local relatives or a colleague at work.

In summary, we can conclude that the neighborhood is the source of most social contacts and friendships among first term wives and that these friendships are mostly with their peers - wives of other enlisted men.

#### 4. Husband's Conditions of Work

The questionnaire includes an extensive section relating to husband's service: length of time in service; reason for joining; type of work; his attitude toward his work; how he gets along with others in his unit; wife's knowledge of unit and the people in it. In this section, however, we will describe only the material dealing with certain conditions of work and the respondent's attitude toward these conditions.

We asked each respondent about how many hours a week her husband works on the average. Most women could not answer in terms of a weekly average but indicated the hours per day (e.g. 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.) that her husband works. In some cases, the hours are variable so that the figures below are approximate and represent an estimate of average hours per week.

<u>Hours Worked per Week</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Under 40	1
40 to 45	12
45 to 50	7
50 and over	4

Even allowing for some error, it is apparent that the great majority of enlisted men work a "normal" week, i.e., between 40 and 50 hours per week. Furthermore, the majority of wives seem satisfied with their husband's hours and other conditions of work: sixteen say that they are satisfied or the hours are "O.K.," while only six are dissatisfied. The remaining two do not express any opinion about the hours or conditions of their husbands' work. It should be noted that satisfaction is not necessarily related to length of hours; in two of the cases where hours total over 50, the wives indicate they are satisfied with hours and conditions of work. Among those who are dissatisfied, however, lack of time together is most often mentioned as the source of dissatisfaction.

We also asked respondents how often their husbands go to the field and how they feel when he is away. The table below shows either how often he has gone to the field or expects to go in the case of relative newcomers.

<u>Field Trips</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Often (once a month or more)	7
Sometimes (several times a year)	8
Seldom (once or twice a year)	7
Never	2

The majority go to the field at least several times a year, although in most cases the length of stay in the field is relatively short (3 to 5 days). Field duty is obviously a normal part of army service and almost all the wives experience it at least occasionally.

Respondents' reactions to field duty vary considerably. The list below indicates answers to the question "How do you feel when your husband goes to the field?" and the number of women giving each type of response in order of frequency. (The total is more than 24 as some women had several reactions to field duty.)

<u>Feelings when husband is in Field</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Lonely	11
Good to be apart sometime; relief	5
Scared to be alone	3
Nothing to do; need more activity	3
Keep busy with activities, people	3
Worry about accidents; other things	2
Adjusted to it; feel OK	2
Hate it	1

It is hardly surprising that almost half of the women cite loneliness as their reaction to husband's absence in the field. However, several indicate that they accept this despite feeling lonely. Acceptance is also the major theme among those who try to keep busy as well as the women who simply state they have adjusted to the situation. What may be surprising is the five respondents who cite the positive factors in being apart for a while, mentioning that it reduces tension, makes for a change and in general, is not bad for a marriage. It should be noted that most of these women are not undergoing marital problems.

In summary, the reactions to field duty are not overwhelmingly negative. The general theme is one of acceptance despite feelings of loneliness and lack of activity and, in a few cases, occasional absence is perceived as somewhat enjoyable, a positive factor in the marriage.

#### ROLE OF THE ARMY WIFE

One of the major interests in this research is the concept of role: how the role of the army wife is defined, perceived and enacted. Consequently, in the initial exploratory interview, we included a section dealing with role. We found this a very difficult concept to operationalize; i.e., we could not use the term "role" which has multiple and ambiguous meanings in everyday language. (The concept of role is not entirely clear in sociology as well; we are using it in the sense of the type of attitudes and behaviors considered desirable or appropriate for the status of "enlisted man's wife.") We tried out different approaches, wording, etc. in the exploratory interviews; none was entirely successful. However, we succeeded in developing a series of questions bearing on the role of the enlisted man's wife. These questions never use the term "role" but rather refer to how one acts or behaves and what is expected of the enlisted man's wife.

The initial and basic question was phrased as follows:

"How is an enlisted soldier's wife supposed to act?"

The results overwhelmingly indicate that this idea either has not occurred to most respondents or that they have not the faintest notion as to how to respond. Over three-quarters (19) of the women either have no response, say they don't know or have no idea. The few who do respond mention qualities or behavior such as courtesy and respect (e.g., acting like a "lady"); understanding; keeping one's opinion to oneself; and developing independence.

A related question asked "what is expected of an army wife?" and this elicited somewhat more response. Those who answer tend to mention qualities such as patience, understanding and support toward one's husband while a few mention responsibility and understanding. However, over half indicate they do not know what is expected or say "nothing different from a regular wife," i.e., a civilian wife.

We were also interested in interaction across ranks asking respondents how you are supposed to act toward people (and their wives) of different ranks. This question, more than any other in the interview, tended to arouse resentment. Ten respondents indicate that they treat everyone in the same manner and several of these strongly reject any hint that superiors should be treated differently from one's peers. An additional six

respondents simply say they do not know or have no response. Among those who do respond, the most common answer is to show respect and courtesy to superiors and in one case "don't get mad at the sergeant." One respondent simply says you have to act differently but does not specify how.

Wherever there was some response as to appropriate ways to act, a follow-up question asked how the respondent had learned this. The most usual responses are simply "myself" (3), and husband (3). A couple of women had been guided by relatives married to soldiers or by a friend. Finally, two women indicate that they learned certain things from meetings held for wives either by the unit or by an army agency.

Finally, we asked whether they felt the army could help in making wives understand what is expected of them and if so, what suggestions they might make. Almost one-third (7) of the respondents simply answered "no," "don't know," or "there is nothing the army can do." However, the majority did respond to this and their suggestions show a common theme. Most relate to efforts to integrate wives into the life of the military community through meetings, social activities including wives and families, clubs, and classes. Several respondents indicate the importance of initial orientation introducing the new wife to the post by showing her where things are located, who to call, etc. A few women suggest that a "welcoming person" assigned to introduce the family to the post on a one-to-one basis would be most effective. Others mention greater consideration of families and the need for recruiters to talk to wives at the time of enlistment. However, the major themes are the initial welcome and orientation and the need for continual wives' involvement through social and other activities. The conclusion that emerged is that the military, at least on this post, has been generally deficient in both respects.

These results relating to the role of the army wife represent essentially a non-finding, that is, the absence of role. However, this does not imply that the results are insignificant. The idea that there is some kind of appropriate behavior, attitudes, etc. associated with one's status as an enlisted man's wife is simply foreign to most of the first term wives we interviewed. Moreover, a sizeable proportion of the respondents reject the idea of role, especially that associated with social differences, i.e., interaction across ranks. Others indicate that they are not in the army and that there is no reason to develop any set of attitudes or behaviors different from their usual responses as a civilian wife. Where they do show an awareness of desired behavior or attitudes, these tend to be expressed in terms of their relationship to their husbands, rather than to the military community (e.g., patience, understanding, etc.).



At this point, it seems reasonable to say that among the wives in this sample there is no clearly defined role for the enlisted man's wife nor do most wives perceive or even contemplate such a role. We can speculate as to the reasons for this "role-lessness."

1. Most obvious is the fact that the Army does little to define the role of the enlisted man's wife nor does it do much to prepare her for her entry into the military community.

2. The concept of a role in some way violates certain basic values held by these women. Evidence of this is seen in the rejection of "special" behavior toward people of other ranks. This is viewed as undemocratic, a violation of the general social value that everyone is equal. In the same way, some women perceive that any special behavior as an "army wife" (i.e., a role), is contrary to their own individualism and the idea that they "be themselves" at all times.

3. Although the idea of a role and its associated behavior is apparently either unknown and/or rejected, most respondents implicitly recognize the need for some kind of socialization into the military community in their suggestions for greater involvement and activities among army wives. Thus, without explicitly stating it, these wives are aware of their common situations, their entry into a new social community and the need to learn something about it. They recognize that they occupy a certain status; they do not as yet associate ways of behaving (a role) with that status.

#### SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Fort Grant has a number of programs and agencies which provide support to soldiers and their families in a number of areas of life. Some of the major ones are as follows: Housing Office, Employment Service, Red Cross, chaplaincy, Army Emergency Relief, Army Community Service (ACS) and wives' groups. ACS has organized a welcome service for newcomers which includes a comprehensive packet with phone numbers, maps, information on budgeting, local points of interest, etc. There is also an outreach coordinator to provide services in the housing areas on post.

We found that first term wives at Grant generally have limited or vague knowledge of these programs and agencies. In most cases, they recognize the names if we mention them but most have not utilized any services other than housing. The exceptions are families that have experienced a serious problem or crisis of some sort (usually financial or marital); in these cases, they have sought help from agencies, usually the Red Cross, Army Emergency Relief or the Chaplain. Few wives seem to be aware of wives' groups and most do not expect to participate in them. It should be pointed out that the ACS welcome program

is relatively new and depends on voluntary registration of newcomers which may explain its failure to reach many first term wives.

Finally, there is one Army service which wives are familiar with, use a great deal and appreciate (although there are some specific complaints) and that is the medical service. Grant has a program for families with exceptional children (i.e., children with certain serious health problems) and arranges for medical care and referrals for these children. Two respondents in this sample are in this program.

As indicated above, the first term army wife does recognize the need for socialization into the military community even while she is unaware of the "role" of the army wife. It is also fairly evident that the army has done little to prepare her for her new life as a military wife. In this section, we want to examine more specifically the experiences of this group of respondents in adjusting to military life.

The importance of the entry or welcome into military life and the community emerged in response to the questions on expected behavior. The interview also included a specific item asking whether the Army helped in welcoming the respondent or enabling her to adjust and, if so, in what way. The responses are shown in the table below.

<u>Initial Support or Welcome from Army</u>	<u>Frequency*</u>
None	11
Unit support; NCO	4
Visitor to home	4
Literature (letter, maps, brochures)	9

\*The total is greater than 24 since visitors usually left literature as well.

Almost half of the respondents recall no initial welcome or support from the Army or agencies affiliated with it. Several respondents described rather bitterly that they sat alone in their apartments for weeks until they got to know some neighbors. Where there was any "welcome," it was most likely to be in the form of some kind of written material; several respondents received only a letter before they arrived at the post; another was given some maps. The respondents who seem most satisfied with their welcome are those who had a unit sponsor who introduced the family to the post and provided information and help where needed. "Official" visits to the home were generally described as brief and perfunctory, usually with the objective of leaving some literature. Only one respondent describes real and

continuing assistance by a visitor who was generally available when help was needed (in this case, an ACS representative).

The table above refers only to the initial welcome by "official" sources of support. As we can see, in only a few cases is any real support described by respondents. However, most of these women have adjusted to the military community to some degree and, in another question, we tried to identify the major sources of support in their overall adjustment:

"Who helped you most in adjusting to life here and life as an Army wife in general?"

<u>Major Source of Help in Adjustment</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Husband	7
Friend/neighbor	6
NCO/wife	3
Relative (either local or in Army)	3
Other Army personnel (nurse; chaplain)	2
No one; myself	3

The major source of support for the first term wife is her husband, followed closely by friends (who are usually neighbors as well). Over half of the respondents report husbands and friends as most important in helping them to adjust. Only three indicate unit-based sources of help, usually the NCO or his wife. (In one of these cases, the NCO is female.) Finally, several respondents have relatives in the area or in the Army, who have either helped them to adjust or have taught them what to expect of military life. The three women who say no one has helped them indicate that they have learned to adjust on their own.

In several cases, it is clear that the respondent has had a mentor, someone who has been available as a source of information and social support on a continuous basis. These can be different people, e.g., relatives, friends on the post, the unit NCO and, in one case, a nurse treating an exceptional child in the family. Those who report a relationship with a mentor generally describe it as extremely satisfying both instrumentally (providing information, guidance, etc.), socially and emotionally. The feeling is that the mentor really cares and is available when the individual needs any kind of help. The mentor is most valuable in the early period of adjustment but several

women indicate that they feel they can still call on them if something unusual occurs.

Since most respondents recall either no welcoming activities or at best, a perfunctory welcome, we asked what they think the Army could do to help new families adjust. A variety of responses were given; in many cases, respondents mentioned several things. The results are presented below.

<u>Help New Families Adjust</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Orientation Activities (tours and/or classes)	8
Visitor; welcome wagon	6
Welcome packet; literature; maps; bulletins on activities	5
Meetings for wives; support groups	4
Activities for wives (unspecified)	2
Providing transportation	1
Nothing Army can do; Don't know	3

It is evident that the some kind of introduction or orientation, either in the form of classes, tours or both is favored by the single largest group. Many wives mention that it is initially hard to find places, the post is bewildering and that it is even difficult to locate phone numbers for medical care and other help. A sizeable group also suggests one-on-one visits, i.e., someone who visits the newly arrived wife more than once, explains things to her, leaves literature and is available for information, if needed. Literature, brochures, etc. are usually mentioned in conjunction with orientation activities or a visitor. Finally, several women suggest general meetings where wives can discuss common problems and simply get to know each other in a group situation.

We should note that although these respondents feel they received little in the way of initial welcome or support, most think that they have adjusted to some extent and most have developed sources of support (e.g., see section on Friends). Furthermore, they do not suggest that support activities by the Army will solve all problems. Their major point is that some of their initial difficulties and problems could easily have been mitigated by relatively simple methods such as introducing them to the post and local area; providing maps; pointing out the major facilities on the post; making available an individual they could call for information.

Generally, both with regard to initial introduction and later experience, most women apparently want some recognition that they are in the military community and that the Army provide a means for their involvement (in terms of information, activities, etc.) in that community. The consensus is that the Army has not been effective in providing help and support for new wives in their initial and continuing socialization into military life.

## B. FORT WINSTON

In this section, we will describe the results of research at the second site of this study; this research essentially utilized the same methodology and interview schedule as at the first site. We will indicate where any variation in method occurred.

### SAMPLE

The second site for this study is a large army post located in the South about 35 miles from a metropolitan area. Driving from the airport (located near the city) to the post, one passes through largely rural area. The post itself is situated in a small southern town, one which has grown considerably since the expansion and rebuilding of the post in the last decade. The expansion is reflected in extensive commercial areas (e.g. shopping malls) located between the old town center and the post. Fast food restaurants, pawn shops, supermarkets are all proliferating in this area; the result is an appearance similar to the commercial sprawl found around many American towns with consequent problems such as heavy traffic. The post itself is well-kept for the most part with recreational and shopping facilities located in the section adjacent to the town. The post housing areas are found at the edges of the post farthest from the town and relatively far from the shopping, medical and recreational facilities (i.e., beyond walking distance).

In an initial visit to the post, we established contact with the Director of Family Support Division, the Commander of the Hospital and Army Community Services. We arranged to obtain a list of first term married enlisted male soldiers from the Personnel Office as well as a local telephone directory. The personnel list included the company but again did not provide home addresses or phone numbers. As the list included several hundred names, we drew a random sample (every eighteenth name) in order to reach our desired sample size. We then attempted to arrange about half of our appointments by phone prior to visiting the post. The method used was to call each selected name using either the phone directory or information. (Since the directory was about nine months old, it did not include numbers for relatively recent arrivals which information could provide.) If the number was disconnected or unobtainable, we proceeded to the following name.

Through this method, we made about half of the desired appointments, describing the interview and arranging to confirm it after we arrived at the post. The remainder of the interviews were arranged from the post and the objective was to assure a representative sample in terms of length of service, housing and racial composition. Consequently, we did not use a random method

to complete the sample but rather a combination of sources such as respondents and ACS outreach representatives.

Most of the interviews arranged prior to the visit were completed although, as might be expected, some had to be rearranged. Two respondents could not be located; in one case, her husband said she was away although it was possible he did not want her to do the interview. In another case, the phone had been disconnected and we could not reach the individual. We did experience more refusals than at the previous site. Two women simply gave flat refusals while three working wives declined for lack of time (one offered to do a phone interview but this was not feasible). Finally, one reluctant respondent was not at home at the scheduled time and her husband was vague as to when she would return. A possible source of bias can be seen in the refusal of employed women despite our willingness to interview on weekends, in the evening or at any time convenient to them.

Despite these complications, we did complete twenty interviews with a variety of respondent (described below). As in our previous experience, we found that once started, the interviews were always finished and in a number of cases, it was clear that the respondents enjoyed them. We heard comments that it was good to talk about these things as well as invitations to visit for a while after the interview.

It should be noted that, unlike Fort Grant, the interviews at Fort Winston were conducted by two different interviewers using the same semi-structured questionnaire; usually, both were present but only one asked the questions and later wrote up comments. However, an examination of the interviews does not reveal any consistent differences that might be due to interviewer effect.

Below, we will report the results of these interviews, using the same categories of variables as in the case of Fort Grant. We will then summarize and compare the two sets of data in terms of similarities and differences.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The sample of respondents, as at Fort Grant, consists of wives of enlisted men, generally in the lower ranks. However, the distribution concentrates in somewhat higher ranks than at Fort Grant. There are no E1 or E2's and most husbands are E4 and 5's as follows:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
E3	6
E4	4
E5	10

Unlike Fort Grant which included only support units, the soldiers at Fort Winston are found in both combat arms and support units.

<u>Type of Company</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Field Artillery	5
Infantry	6
Combat Support	3

The remainder are found (one each) in Armor, Air Defense, Military Intelligence, Tank, Quartermaster and Adjutant General units. Nearly half of the MOS's are either truck drivers or mechanics while the rest include clerks, radar specialist, supply personnel; several are unspecified as the wife knows only that her husband is in the infantry or field artillery.

While the first term wife here is young, the age range is broader than at Fort Grant.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
19 and under	2
20-24	6
25-30	7
25-30	3
31-35	2



At Fort Grant, the modal age is 19 or less and the oldest respondent is 28; here the concentration is in a somewhat older group (25-30).

Most have been married for only a few years; thirteen are married for 2 years or less while only three have been married for over six years. Almost all the respondents have children, again unlike Fort Grant where nearly half of the women had no children. The distribution is as follows:

<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
None	2
One	13
Two	4
Three	1

Of those with one child, four are currently pregnant.

In terms of ethnic distribution, over half (14) are white, four are Black, and two are of Hispanic origin. In addition, one of the white respondents has an interracial marriage. At Fort Winston, we had no problem in reaching minority group members using no special methodology. The Hispanic respondents are bilingual (one is Mexican-born) but speak fluent English.

This group is different from the previous sample in one respect: three of the respondents come from military families and three others have husbands from military families. In addition, the two oldest women (age 31 and 35) have been married before, in both cases, to men in the military. Thus, we have a sample in which a sizeable group has some kind of military background (although not necessarily Army) prior to their husband's service.

Respondents come from all over the country; however, the region of concentration is the Midwest with nine women coming from that area; interestingly, within that area, four come from one state (Ohio). We observed a tendency to affiliate with people from one's home state; several respondents mentioned this as the origin of friendships although they had not known each other previously. As in the case at Fort Grant, most (12) come from small towns, while seven grew up in large cities or suburbs and one was reared on air force bases.

Educational background shows the following distribution; as in the earlier sample, high school graduate is the modal category. It should be noted that seven of these high school graduates report additional training such as courses in word processing, computer, banking, etc.

<u>Education</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Less than h.s. grad	1
High school graduate	13
Some college	5
College graduate	1

The socio-economic background of this group is very similar to that observed at Fort Grant with one difference: there are no women from the "underclass", i.e., unstable or marginal parental occupations or unemployed parents. Eleven respondents are from working class backgrounds in terms of parental occupations (e.g., truck driver, factory worker, etc.) while eight are middle class (white collar or self-employed) and one has a professional or upper middle class parent.

As in the previous sample, the majority of women are not employed.

<u>Employment Status</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Currently working	
Full time	3
Part time	1
Not working	16

Among those who work, all have children; the two childless women do not work. One respondent manages the trailer park in which she lives and also baby sits; two women baby sit in their homes and the fourth takes care of an elderly invalid who lives with her. We can see that all of these jobs are carried on within the home. Two respondents have been employed in restaurants but left because of baby sitting problems and one woman is currently on maternity leave from her job in an office on the post. It is not clear if she will return to this position. Finally, it should be noted that two respondents work on a regular basis as volunteers in support centers. From comments made by respondents, it is apparent that most are not looking for jobs at present or in the near future even those who had worked before moving to this post. The reasons for this center about transportation difficulties, problems of child care for pre-schoolers and, most important, the perception that there are no desirable jobs in the area. It should be noted that the great majority of women include working as part of their future life plans.

## GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD MILITARY LIFE

Once again, we asked all respondents the introductory question "how are you finding life as an Army wife?" with the following results:

<u>General Attitude</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Enthusiatic; enjoying it, etc.	4
O.K., satisfied, not bad	10
Equivocal; not sure; ambivalent	3
Life is hard; dissatisfied, etc.	3

Unlike Fort Grant respondents, no one here takes the extreme negative position (i.e., "hate it"). In fact, about two-thirds are at least mildly positive about Army life, a higher proportion than at Grant.

This generally favorable response is reflected in feelings about making the Army a career.

<u>Attitude toward Army as a Career</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1. Yes	12
2. No	5
3. Don't know; up to him; ambivalent	3

We see that somewhat fewer wives favor the Army as a career than like Army life. The table below shows whether these two sets of attitudes are consistent among members of the sample.

<u>Feelings about Life as an Army Wife</u>			
<u>Army as a Career</u>	Positive	Negative	Ambivalent
Favor	10	1	1
Oppose	1	2	2
Ambivalent	3	0	0

Among the fourteen wives who are positive toward military life, only ten favor the Army as a career; three are ambivalent, usually indicating it is the husband's decision. The respondent

who opposes the Army as a career is actually enthusiastic about Army life but explained that her husband joined to obtain college benefits and never intended an Army career. The only other clearly inconsistent respondent has many complaints about her life (especially housing) but wants and expects her husband to stay in the military. It is perhaps noteworthy that she was raised in a military environment and thus, despite dissatisfactions, may take this life for granted. The one respondent who is ambivalent about military life but wants her husband to reenlist also has a military background in her first marriage. Despite some inconsistencies and uncertainties, we can conclude that satisfaction with life as a military wife is reflected in feelings about husband's making the Army a career.

#### PERSONALITY VARIABLES

The three scales administered at Grant were used again at Fort Winston with the following results.

<u>Self Esteem Score</u>		<u>Frequency</u>
Low	0	-
	1	-
	2	-
	3	2
	4	4
	5	7
High	6	7

It is clear that responses are skewed toward high self esteem; only two women score below 4 and the great majority fall into the two most positive categories.

The Mastery Scale, as in the earlier sample, shows results concentrated in the categories of high internal locus of control.

<u>Mastery Score</u>		<u>Frequency</u>
High ext.	0	-
	1	-
	2	-
	3	2
	4	-
	5	6
	6	3
High int.	7	9

Almost all the respondents fall into the high internal locus of control categories (5-7); even more striking is the fact that the modal score is 7, indicating that all responses reflect a sense of internal control. As suggested in the earlier section, it is

not immediately apparent why this group of young Army wives should have strong feelings of internal mastery. It is possible that this sense of mastery is related to other factors which we will discuss later, such as a perception that current conditions are temporary and that things will improve, i.e., optimism.

General well being scores (using the Dupuy Scale) show a range from 34 to 103 with the following distribution:

<u>General Well Being Score</u>		<u>Frequency</u>
Low GWB	Under 30	-
	31 - 60	6
	61 - 75	8
	76 - 90	4
High GWB	91 and higher	2

The mean is 69.1 and the median 69.5. These results are very similar to those observed at Grant. The modal category is in the middle while few score very high. The table below shows the individual scores on all three scales as well as the interviewer's subjective assessment as to the severity of the individual's problems. Again, it should be noted that this assessment is made independent of the scale scores and is based on the total interview, affect and, in some cases, subtle intangible factors perceived during the interview. Respondents are listed in descending order on the GWB scale. An asterisk is placed next to those judged to have serious problems.

RESPONDENT	GWB	SELF ESTEEM	MASTERY	PROBLEMS
101	103	6	7	None
102	98	6	7	None
103	83	5	5	Minor
104	81	5	5	Moderate
105	77	6	5	Minor
106	76	6	6	Minor
107	75	5	7	Minor
108	74	4	7	None
109	73	5	7	Moderate
110	70	6	6	Moderate
111	69	3	6	Minor
112	68	5	5	Minor
113	64	6	7	None
114	62	4	5	Moderate
115	60	4	5	Moderate
116	57	3	3	*Serious
117	56	6	7	*Serious
118	56	4	7	Moderate
119	46	5	3	Moderate
120	34	5	7	*Serious

We can see that the three respondents judged to have serious problems are in the lowest quarter of the GWB scores. Higher GWB scores tend very generally to be related to an assessment that problems are either minor or absent; however, the relationship is not a perfect one. There is a tendency for self esteem scores to be lower among those with lower general well being but there are inconsistencies; with regard to mastery, it is difficult to discern any trend, probably because there is so little variance on this factor, i.e., most respondents are relatively high on internal locus of control. It should be noted that the respondent with the lowest GWB score is undergoing a period of great turmoil while her husband tries to decide whether to reenlist; she perceives this period as temporary but at present is manifesting many of the indications of strain, such as depression, health problems, etc.

#### TYPES OF PROBLEMS

In the section above, we evaluated each respondent in terms of severity of problems but did not include a description of the problems. The table below classifies the major problems reported by respondents who are experiencing either severe or moderate stress.

<u>Type of Problem</u>	<u>Serious</u>	<u>Moderate</u>
Marital	-	1
Social Relations	1	3
Finances	1	4
Problems with the Army	-	1
Boredom; apathy	2	1
Health	-	2
Employment	-	2
Situational	1	-

Other problems include homesickness and housing. Those with minor problems report similar factors with the addition of imminent deployment as a source of stress in a few cases. The woman reporting situational stress as described above is awaiting her husband's decision on reenlistment. Generally, the types of problems are similar to those described as Fort Grant with two major additions: boredom and lack of employment are

apparently more important here as sources of stress than at Grant. Problems relating to social relations tend to take the form of isolation, and lack of friends.

The problems described above are the most salient for the respondents as they represent answers to general questions about sources of stress. In the next sections, we will describe results relating to specific questions dealing with different areas of life: finances, housing, neighbors and husband's work.

## 1. Finances

With regard to financial problems, this group splits fairly evenly. Eleven of the twenty respondents state that finances are a problem, although one describes this as "minor." The four women who work (either full time or part time) indicate that money is not a problem and several of these say it is their employment that makes the difference. The one respondent who is on leave from her job on post indicates that her loss of income has created a serious problem with regard to money. This is consistent with the Fort Grant results which suggested that loss of additional income, rather than absolute income, can be a serious source of stress. Over half of those reporting financial problems say that this has a negative effect on their marriage, describing tension and arguments centering about money. Finally, as seen at Grant, most women are optimistic - eight clearly expect finances to improve while the remaining three rather dubiously "hope so." This expectation of improvement is probably realistic as most can expect their husbands to advance in rank and some look forward to post housing in which rent is fully covered by their housing allowance.

## 2. Housing

Thus far, we have seen many similarities between the two samples. However, with regard to housing there are sharp differences. At Grant, almost all the respondents reside in a single housing area on post, occupying virtually identical apartments. At Winston, there is wide variation in both location and quality of housing. Only four respondents live on post, all of them in apartment units. The remainder live off post in locations varying from just outside the post limits to about ten miles away. The modal housing for first term family is the trailer park; it is estimated that there are 138 trailer parks in the vicinity around Fort Winston, most of them occupied by army personnel. Eight respondents in this group live in trailer parks while five are in apartments, two in town houses and one in a single house off post. The standard unit (on or off post) is a two-bedroom apartment, town house or trailer. Fourteen women live in two bedroom units, two have one bedroom units and four occupy three bedroom units.



Before reporting attitudes toward housing, it is necessary to describe the various types of housing. The post housing areas are located at the periphery of the post; we interviewed four women living in three different housing areas. All are generally similar in layout, consisting of a series of circular streets (cul-de-sacs) radiating from one or two access roads. The buildings are usually four-plexes, i.e., two apartments on each floor of a two-story building; all have carports. The general appearance is neat and cheerful; the buildings look clean, some landscaping has been done and a few streets include playground equipment for children. Because these are cul-de-sacs, traffic is limited. The apartments themselves are reasonably spacious with a good sized living-dining area and a modern kitchen, including a dishwasher. There is a degree of variation relating to age; the newest apartments are clearly superior including terraces and a large utility room for laundry and other uses. All the post apartments we visited were in good condition, clean, and cheerful.

The apartments and town houses off post show somewhat greater variation in terms of locale. All of the units are in good condition although some are rather small; the two one-bedroom units are found in off-post apartments and are small for a family with children. However, the developments vary in appearance; some are rather bare, consisting of a series of buildings with no trees or grass while others are extremely attractive and inviting looking with landscaping, playgrounds and a park-like atmosphere.

We were told that trailer parks vary in terms of livableness, that some are unsightly while others are quite attractive. We visited only a tiny proportion of the 138 trailer parks but, with one exception, all appeared most unpleasant. In most parks, there is no landscaping but simply a line of trailers, which are separated by sandy paths. The areas are littered and homeless wild dogs are prevalent. The single park in which three respondents live (this park is a common site for first term housing) has no space or playground equipment for children, the owner citing insurance problems. There is no grass, not a single tree and the units are lined up in rows rather close together. There is a general feeling of dust, probably due to the sandy roads and on a rainy day, driving is difficult because of the sand turns to mud. The other trailer parks were slightly, but not much, pleasanter in appearance. We were warned not to interview at night due to bad roads, poor light and lack of security; this warning appeared to be fully justified. The single exception to this depressing picture is the trailer occupied by one respondent which is located not in a park but separately near the home of the landlord of a small trailer park. This trailer is large (three bedrooms) and very attractively located with a grassy lawn, trees and playground equipment nearby. The respondent has planted a garden around the trailer and the general effect of a small private house, a pleasant exception to the usual trailer residence.

It is perhaps surprising that more than half the respondents are at least somewhat positive about their housing; three are enthusiastic (these all occupy apartments or townhouses on or off post) while nine find their housing "OK" or satisfactory. Five women can only be described as neutral while three are negative in a moderate way. This lack of strong negative affect is probably due to a perception of non-permanence; respondents living in trailers all expect or hope to move on post in the near future and the perception that the current situation is temporary seems to create a stoic kind of acceptance despite many specific complaints.

Specific complaints, particularly about the trailer units, center about poor roads (i.e., sand), roaming animals, roaches and other bugs, poor maintenance, poor facilities for children, lack of security, and loud and boisterous neighbors. Others off post complain about high rentals, size of units and, in a few cases, about Black neighbors and children.

On the other hand, there are also positive comments about neighbors such as "we're all one big family," friendliness, and helpfulness. Other favorable comments include adequate space, comfort, cleanliness, security, good maintenance and convenient location. Most of these comments are offered by women living in non-trailer units, some of them comparing their present housing with former trailer residence (e.g., "it's better than the trailer I lived in before"). It should be noted that all four women living on post are very satisfied with their housing.

Most (13) are positive about military housing and would like to move on post. Only three express negative attitudes toward military housing, usually citing the uniformity and sameness and desire not to be part of a close military community. Most of the respondents off post complain about the long wait for post housing and several feel the system is unfair, giving preference to certain groups of soldiers (e.g., those just back from overseas duty).

Finally, in terms of ideal housing, the largest group (13) would like a single family dwelling while most of the rest want apartments or town houses and one respondent says she can be happy anywhere. The majority think they will someday attain this desired housing, a perception that may help explain their relative satisfaction with less than ideal present conditions.

### 3. Neighbors and Community

First term wives at Winston are generally positive toward neighbors and the community although somewhat less enthusiastic than their counterparts at Grant. The table below sums up their attitudes:

<u>Attitude to Neighbors and Community</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Positive	
Enthusiastic; like them	7
OK	5
Don't know; no opinion	4
Ambivalent	2
Negative	2

While more than half are positive, only about one-third show any enthusiasm (compared to over half at Grant). Those who "don't know" usually are recent arrivals who have not had a chance to form opinions. Finally, if we add the ambivalent to the negative, we find a higher proportion at Winston who are not favorably inclined toward neighbors (one-fifth compared to only one respondent at Grant). It should, of course, be pointed out that the greater variance in attitudes at Winston is probably due to the variety of communities in which respondents reside as compared to Grant where the majority live in a single residential area.

When asked what they like about the neighborhood/community, most women mention interpersonal factors, e.g., friendliness, helpfulness, "everyone is in the same boat," etc. As observed earlier, negative factors are discussed in much greater detail. Respondents cite the following: unfriendly, inconsiderate and snobbish neighbors; loud noise and parties; stray animals; lack of play facilities; too much traffic; crime and behavior of certain racial/ethnic groups (clannishness, aggression). Generally, criticism focuses on either interpersonal relations or community structure, as it did at Grant. The race-related remarks, however, did not occur among respondents at Grant. It should be noted that the racist remarks tend to be mild and are prefaced by an acknowledgment that such comments are "wrong."

We asked a follow-up question as to whether the respondent feels she is part of the community or separate from it. Eight women feel integrated into the community (one, the trailer park manager states that the community would fall apart without her) while an additional five indicate they are starting to feel that they belong. The remaining seven feel separate from their neighborhood. The reasons for this are apparently either

personal preference (e.g., "I don't care to participate") or feelings that their neighbors are unfriendly or unresponsive to their overtures.

In terms of contact with neighbors, we find that over half (eleven) report considerable contact such as visits, joint activities, etc.; among these, four have a lot of contact with a limited number of neighbors while the remainder describe more extensive networks. Four women have some contact (chatting, occasional visits) while five report little contact confined to greetings at most. Among the last group are the respondents who find neighbors unfriendly or unresponsive and who do not feel that they belong to the community.

The majority of friendships, as in the case of Grant, are with wives of other enlisted men, either neighbors or unit wives; in some cases, these are the same. Twelve women describe these type of friendships. However, five are friends with NCO wives, again either in the neighborhood or unit and three feel they are friends with wives of officers, engaging in phone conversations, visits, etc. This differs from Grant where there were almost no friendships across rank lines. More of the friendships here appear to be unit-based, possibly because the unit is more salient in the lives of the military wife at this post than it is at Fort Grant. (This will be discussed more fully in a later section.) Finally, one respondent whose life centers about her church in a neighboring town has made friendships with civilian members of this church. This respondent is unique in relating her life to the church, rather than to the military community.

We observed an interesting phenomenon at Winston which was not seen at Grant. That is a strong feeling of consciousness of kind, a tendency to relate to those of similar background. One Hispanic respondent reports a very active social life with other Hispanics; despite fluent English, she speaks only Spanish on social occasions. Similarly, it was apparent that several Black women enjoy friendships with other Blacks. And, finally, we observed a tendency to seek out people from one's home state; several respondents developed friendships with people from their home state and indicated that this was the initial basis for the friendship.

Most of the respondents have made some friends. The exceptions are those women who have arrived too recently to have met many people and, in one case, a woman whose personality is marked by a desire for privacy and distance from other people. It is exemplified in the fact that she lives in the trailer separated from others and that she has no desire for post housing, indicating it brings you "too close to other people."

#### 4. Husband's Conditions of Work

At Fort Grant, we observed that most first term soldiers work a "normal" week in terms of hours, i.e., few work over 50 hours a week. The situation at Fort Winston is quite different: over half of the respondents report their husband's work week as 50 hours or more and four of these describe a 60+ hour week.

<u>Hours Worked per Week</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Under 40	-
40 to 45	5
45 to 50	3
50 to 60	8
60 and over	4

It is perhaps surprising that only five women are clearly dissatisfied with their husbands' hours and work conditions. In these cases, dissatisfaction is based on long hours. However, nine women are satisfied and an additional six are satisfied, with some qualification, such as occasional unpredictability of hours, very early starting time, or all night duty. Generally, most wives accept the work week as part of army life and adjust to it.

The picture is very different with regard to field duty. Although we asked specific questions about field duty and the respondent's reaction to it, the subject usually came up spontaneously, often in answer to the initial question "how are you finding life as an army wife?" Most respondents immediately offered comments such as "I like army life despite field duty," or "Army life is hard because my husband is in the field so much of the time." Field duty is a salient and painful issue to many wives at Fort Winston; this is not the case at Fort Grant where field duty is generally less frequent and of shorter duration. At Winston, over half of the husbands are in the field often as the table below indicates:

<u>Field Trips</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Often (once a month or more)	12
Sometimes (several times a year)	5
Seldom (once or twice a year)	2
Never	1

Although five never have field duty (compared to two at Grant), the modal category at Winston is at least once a month. Even more important perhaps is the duration of field duty which ranges from one night to one month, although the latter is rare. Usually, field duty lasts from four days to a week; a week is probably the single time period mentioned most often. Furthermore, unlike Grant, field duty often takes place in some distant area, such as California.

As might be expected, wives' reaction to field duty is more intense than that observed at Fort Grant where loneliness was the major response.

<u>Feelings when husband is in field</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Scared; terrified	10
Lonely	7
Bored; have nothing to do	3
Hurt	1
Accept it	4
Return home when he is in field	2

Those who indicate that they accept field duty or adjust to it often combine this with another response such as feeling lonely. The respondents who are scared describe inability to sleep, hearing noises, fear of staying alone in trailer parks where security has been a problem. Unlike Grant, none of these women mentions any positive aspects to being apart from her husband occasionally.

It is apparent that the first term soldier's conditions of work at Fort Winston represent a salient issue to most wives. Hours tend to be longer than a normal civilian work week; although wives adjust to this, a number complain of length, unpredictability and early or night duty. Field duty arouses strong negative responses; it was our impression that this single factor is the most unpleasant aspect of Army life for this group of respondents. In a later section, we will discuss some of the implications of the conditions of work and attitudes toward them.

## ROLE OF THE ARMY WIFE

At Fort Grant, we found the group of first term wives relatively unresponsive with respect to the role of the Army wife. Questions relating to role either elicited no response or resentment, particularly with respect to different behavior toward people of higher rank.

At Fort Winston, the results were somewhat different. The initial question as to how an enlisted soldier's wife is supposed to act did draw responses from most of the sample. Five women answer in terms of "be yourself," "act like any wife," "just act normal," etc. An additional five respondents cannot answer and one woman rejects the question rather vehemently, stating she would not be told how to behave. Nine respondents do offer some kind of answer with respect to behavior: the qualities mentioned most often involve interpersonal behavior, either toward husband or others. A wife should be supportive, compliant, helpful; she should mind her own business, avoid backstabbing and not be snobbish; she should act like a soldier, not be dependent. One woman suggests loyalty and being a good citizen while another stresses proper behavior and good grooming.

A related question asking what is expected of an Army wife either elicited no response (e.g., don't know, haven't learned yet) or answers similar to those mentioned above: patience; tolerance of field duty; supportive attitude toward husband; ability to cope on her own. Two new responses involve participating in activities on post mentioned by two women and taking care of husbands' uniforms which was volunteered by several respondents.

As in the previous sample, the question on interaction across ranks aroused some resentment. Five respondents reject the idea of different behavior across ranks, indicating that they will not act differently even if it is expected. An additional eight women simply state that they act the same toward everyone, several stating that rank differences stop outside the work place. Three women have no response, saying they don't know or never thought about it and only four indicate that one should act differently to those of higher rank. This last group cites showing greater respect, being very polite or very careful.

When asked how they have learned about expected or appropriate, those who respond cite either their husbands or their own experience as sources of information; only one mentions an officer's wife as a source of advice about behavior.

Because of the relative lack of response to questions on role at Grant, we added a question at Winston as follows: "If you met a new Army wife, what would you tell her about what it is like to be an Army wife?" The type of response is listed in the table below, i.e., the major content of what she would tell a new wife.

<u>Type of Response</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Focus on information	5
Emphasis on loneliness, field duty, husband absence	4
Emphasis on positive (e.g., benefits)	3
Emphasis on negative factors	2
Miscellaneous (be yourself, do things on own, don't get angry)	4
No response; don't know	3

We can see that information-related advice represents the single most frequent response. The importance of information emerges once more in response to a question as to how the Army could help wives understand what is expected of them. Six women have no response and no suggestions. However, among those who do respond, four specifically suggest better communication as to resources and other factors, while five stress improving understanding among wives as to husbands' work (e.g., hours, field duty, etc.) through meetings and talks. The remainder suggest better initial orientation through meetings, classes, tours, unit-based activities, and in one case, assignment of a sponsor. The general theme running through these responses is that of improving wives' knowledge and understanding of Army life in general.

In summary, we observe that first term wives at Fort Winston are somewhat more responsive with respect to role than are those at Grant, a phenomenon that may be due to the apparently greater salience of military life for the Fort Winston wife. However, in both groups, we can see that the concept of "expected" behavior is rejected by many as undemocratic or as contrary to the idea of individualism. There is an emphasis on communication and disseminating information among new wives at Winston, implying that this has not been effectively carried out at the post. We will return to this theme in the next section.



## SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Before we discuss the kind of support first term wives have experienced, we should describe some of the resources available at Fort Winston. The post has a very active Army Community Service which maintains offpost support centers (outreach) at two trailer parks and post housing areas. These are staffed by community volunteers and offer information and referrals, certain social programs, and on-site services such as counseling. Once a month, ACS arranges for a van to take a nurse, a representative of the Judge Advocate's office, a financial planner, etc. to the trailer parks to provide help and information. The Spouse Center on post is located adjacent to the ACS building and offers classes, meeting rooms, information and referrals as well as a comfortable cheerful place where wives can simply drop in informally. There are playpens and cribs for children, card tables, comfortable chairs, etc. Transportation is offered to wives through shuttle bus service both on and off post as well as an emergency van for non-life threatening emergencies. In addition, some units offer spouse activities for wives, although there is considerable variation in this respect. It should be emphasized that these facilities are utilized by many; for example the emergency van made about 1400 calls last year and the Spouse Center estimates that about 600-700 spouses drop in every month.

First term wives stress the importance of support soon after their arrival on post, especially the need for information (e.g., location of facilities, important phone numbers, etc.). The table below summarizes the kind of social support experienced by this group on entry, i.e., what the Army did to welcome them and to help them adjust.

<u>Initial Support or Welcome from Army</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
None	6
Unit support (e.g., visit)	2
Literature	9
Orientation (briefing, tours, etc. )	5
Other (time off)	1

The total is greater than 20 since some experienced more than one type of support.

These results show a higher level of initial support than at Grant where nearly half of the respondents reported no welcome or support of any sort on arrival. At Winston, only 30% report no support and, at a minimum, nearly half received literature,

either directly or through their husbands. The consensus seems to be that welcoming activities and information should be directed toward the wife, as husbands do not always communicate this material.

These data describe only "official" types of initial support. We also asked "who helped you most in adjusting...?" in an effort to identify other, more informal sources of support. Most respondents cite either their husbands (8) or indicate that they have learned things by themselves (8). Four mention friends or neighbors and these appeared to be close, mentor relationships, usually with the wife of another enlisted man. Similar to Grant, these mentor relationships appear to be particularly helpful as well as emotionally satisfying and form the basis for continuing friendship.

Finally, we asked respondents what the Army could do to help new families adjust with the results presented below:

<u>Help New Families Adjust</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Orientation/Information (newsletter, classes,)	9
Wecome wagon; visitor	2
Sponsor	1
Outreach	1
Don't know; nothing	3
Programs are there; System is good	5

Women most frequently mention initial orientation and dissemination of information, emphasizing that Winston is a large post and that simply finding one's way around is difficult. Some suggest tours, others mention meetings and other group activities among wives while still others believe written information such as an ongoing newsletter would be most helpful. A major difference here as compared to Grant is the group who find the present system satisfactory, indicating that resources are there if the individual wants to use them. This spontaneous type of favorable response was not observed at Grant where respondents were overwhelmingly critical about lack of support.

It is our impression that Fort Winston does have an active and elaborate support system in place. It is also apparent that some, but not all, first term wives are aware of it and use it. Some of the variation in knowledge and utilization can be explained by differences in initial experience such as involvement of the unit and development of a mentor

relationship. Other reasons may lie in the area of individual personality differences.

## MAJOR THEMES

We have described the results of interviews with first term soldiers' wives at two research sites. There are some tentative themes and generalizations that emerge from these separate descriptions as well as from a comparison of similarities and differences between the two posts. Although the nature of the samples precludes statistical generalization, we can gain some insight into the adjustment, socialization and problems of the wife of the first term enlisted man.

1. There are many similarities between the two sets of respondents (i.e., those at Fort Grant and at Fort Winston). Almost all are young wives of lower rank enlisted men; most come from working class or lower middle class backgrounds, have grown up in small towns and have completed high school. Although the majority are white, there is representation in both samples of Blacks, Hispanics and other minority groups. In terms of general and specific attitudes toward the military and toward certain life domains (e.g., finances, housing, neighborhood), most express mild satisfaction but little enthusiasm. Wives who are satisfied with military life are likely to favor the Army as a career; there are very few cases where there is inconsistency between attitude toward military life and attitude toward reenlistment. Almost all the husbands joined the Army for economic reasons (e.g., security, benefits) and most wives appreciate these factors. It is perhaps noteworthy that only one respondent indicated that her husband enlisted for reasons of patriotism.

2. There are, however, certain differences between the two groups of respondents. In terms of background, respondents at Winston show somewhat greater variation in several ways: they cover a wider age range and several have been married before. Almost all the wives at Winston have children and very few work while at Grant, respondents split pretty evenly between those with and without children and nearly half are employed. We find little relationship between family status and employment. However, as noted earlier, only a few work outside the home as the most common occupation is babysitting. More important perhaps is the fact that at Winston several respondents have military backgrounds in terms of parents' occupation and previous marriages. Moreover, there are major differences between the two posts. Grant includes only support troops while Winston is basically a center for combat troops. This produces certain differences in terms of soldiers' work conditions and the general military presence. At Grant, most soldiers work a "normal" day and week, with occasional variations such as short field duty and night duty. At Winston, there is much greater variation with a sizeable group working very long hours; field duty is frequent

and of relatively long duration for most soldiers. Field duty represents a highly salient issue in the lives of Winston wives; they immediately introduce the subject, indicating either that it is a major source of stress in their lives or that they have somehow managed to adjust to it. At Grant, in contrast, field duty seems to be just another part of the work life of the soldier. Perhaps because of these differences, the military seems to be much more salient in the life of the Fort Winston wife than for her counterpart at Grant. Respondents at Winston seem highly aware that they are in a military environment; they are more knowledgeable about their husband's MOS than are Grant wives and they frequently use military terms such as "Delta company," which Grant respondents never do. Finally, the unit appears to be more visible at Winston than at Grant, although there is variability in this respect at Winston. Some units are very active in providing support and activities for wives while others are not. Possibly because of the greater unit presence, Winston wives experience more interaction across ranks with several first term wives enjoying friendships with wives of NCOs and officers.

The higher visibility or salience of the military at Winston is observed despite the fact that most first term families live off post. At Grant, almost all respondents live on post, most of them in a single housing area. This community is the center for their daily lives and social interaction; to the extent that they have developed a sense of common interests and consciousness of kind, it is rooted in this community where most residents are lower rank enlisted families and where everyone occupies very similar housing units. At Winston, there is wide variation in housing both in terms of quality and location. The modal unit for first termers is the trailer park; these represent fairly minimal housing and are usually located on unattractive sites (see description above). On the other hand, all of the post housing and most of the apartment and town house units off post are comfortable, cheerful and located in nicely planned developments. However, these private apartments and town houses tend to be relatively expensive and housing allowances do not usually cover the rent. Thus, there is no single residential community for first termers at Winston as there is at Grant. But wives at Winston have a sense of common interests, problems despite the fact that they are scattered in terms of residence. (It should be noted that most of the off post housing such as apartment complexes and trailer parks is overwhelmingly military.)

3. Although one of the central points of interest in the research was the concept of role, we found little evidence at Fort Grant that the first term wife perceives her behavior in terms of a role; in fact, in certain instances (such as interaction across ranks), some wives explicitly reject any idea of prescribed or expected behavior or attitudes. However, despite this, respondents implicitly expressed a "consciousness of kind," a recognition that they share a common situation and

that they would like group activities and interaction based on this shared status.

At Fort Winston, we found a similar rejection of prescribed behavior across ranks. However, there was somewhat greater awareness and response with respect to role. Most responses were in terms of behavior toward one's husband (e.g., supportiveness) or qualities such as independence that it is necessary for the wife to develop as a coping strategy.

4. These respondents represent a group considered highly vulnerable to stress on the basis of a number of characteristics: they are young, not highly educated and are experiencing a series of life events such as marriage, parenthood and a geographic move. Many have recently undergone a change in their major social status, from student to homemaker (and often mother) and at the same time have lost their social support resources such as family and friends. Thus, these young women with limited coping skills (intellectual and social), are experiencing multiple role transitions and loss of their usual sources of social support. These factors render them highly vulnerable to stress.

5. Many wives apparently develop new social support resources through informal means, for the most part. Mentoring is an important support phenomenon. Several respondents describe a mentoring relationship - this may be with an assigned individual (such as a unit NCO or NCO wife), a relative or a neighbor. In these cases, there is a continuing relationship with someone more knowledgeable and experienced in the military community who helps with information, emotional support, etc. Respondents enjoying such a relationship feel they can call upon this individual when they need help or simply for social reasons. Respondents who have had a mentor seem to have made particularly effective adjustments to military life.

6. There is among the respondents a small group who seem socially isolated. They generally have withdrawn, claiming they do not want friends. This attitude tends to follow a negative experience(s) of feeling rebuffed or betrayed by others. In a few cases, the respondents describe suffering when good friends have moved (an inevitability in the military) and the desire to avoid such experience in the future. In one case, social experience was so traumatic that the respondent broke into tears whenever the subject was brought up; the nature of the experience was never described but had obviously affected all her interactions with others. In some cases, the respondent clearly was not reporting the true cause of her social isolation (e.g., the woman who "wants her privacy"). Among this group, several respondents volunteered that social isolation was a new experience for them, that they had had no difficulty in the past and attributed their present problems to the nature of the military community (e.g., unfriendliness, lack of trust, etc.)

7. There is variation among respondents in a number of ways, in addition to attitudes toward military life. Some live in busy households where the phone is ringing, neighbors are dropping in, children are playing. Others seem lonely and isolated with only the TV for company. At Grant, living quarters are basically similar (the majority of respondents live in one neighborhood) but vary on two dimensions:

neatness----disorder

bareness----personalization

Personalization refers to the extent to which the apartment reflects the interests and personality of the respondent (e.g., as indicated by pictures, plants, ornaments, collections, etc.) The neatness-disorder dimension does not appear significant except in the case of two women who may be psychologically disturbed; in both instances, the disorder verged on the pathologic and, in fact, in one case has been brought to the attention of the Army. However, the degree of personalization does seem a very rough indicator of general mental health. Although basic furnishings are very similar in most apartments, the variation in personalizing one's surroundings seems to indicate whether the woman cares about herself and her environment, whether she is trying to make a life for herself and her family, rather than simply existing. After a while, it was possible to make a general prediction of the GWB Score on the basis of this factor.

This type of analysis cannot be applied to Fort Winston because of the greater variability in residences. Housing on post is very pleasant with spacious, cheerful units. The trailer units are generally somewhat cramped and, as indicated elsewhere, set in depressing surroundings. Other housing off post varies but is mostly quite pleasant. Apartments and trailers differ in the degree of personalization; however, the trailers tend to be extremely cluttered if there are many personal objects around while the rest look relatively bare. It must be pointed out that nearly all trailer residents are on the post housing list and thus see their quarters as temporary.

8. The importance of individual coping resources must be emphasized. Most respondents are of lower or working class origin but several, on the basis of education and parental background, are clearly middle class. Despite the fact that they are deviant in terms of background and present context, the middle class respondents are among the best adjusted women. They are better able to cope in terms of meeting their own social and other needs, often outside the military community. For example, at Grant, two live off post and one has developed friendships at work, outside the military community. It should be noted that two of the middle class respondents are also among the oldest which may partially explain their superior coping resources.

At Fort Winston, several of the wives have some kind of military background and this familiarity with military life does produce an acceptance of certain conditions, such as field duty.

9. In order to understand respondents' attitudes, it is necessary to take into account perceptions and expectations. Most of the wives manifest both general satisfaction as well as satisfaction with specific life domains (although satisfaction appears to be moderate, rather than enthusiastic). We must compare their present situations with earlier experience in terms of finances, housing, social interaction, etc. Thus, although they have modest incomes, the security and benefits compare favorably with their civilian experience. Furthermore, their reference group tends to be people in similar circumstances (other enlisted men's families) or in less favorable circumstances such as civilian friends in economically depressed areas. Furthermore, most respondents are optimistic, perceiving their present life conditions as not permanent and expecting improvement in the future. These factors all help to explain the relative satisfaction found among this group.

The results on the Mastery scale showing high internal locus of control must also be understood within the context. Although it would seem that the military directs much of their lives, most first term wives feel they have control. Apparently, they accept certain limits and, within those parameters, feel they can direct their own lives.

10. Finally, the results at Grant show the general ineffectiveness of official or formal sources of support in terms of delivery of services. Although they are available, most respondents have only a vague awareness of them and use them only when in severe difficulties (such as financial crises). Respondents do indicate a desire for greater support especially at the beginning (e.g., orientation activities). However, in most cases they seem to have developed effective social support through informal means, chiefly in their neighborhood. It is interesting that the single largest group of respondents cite their husbands as the major source of support in their initial adjustment to military life.

At Winston, the situation is somewhat different. The formal support resources appear to be better developed and more active than at Grant (e.g., the outreach program of ACS). More wives report welcoming and support activities on their arrival at the post and there is generally greater awareness of support programs and agencies. However, there is still wide variation among the wives, from those who work as volunteers at support centers or actively participate in unit wives' programs to those who do not know that a Spouse Center exists or that transportation is available to wives both on and off post. Some of this may be due to individual differences in personality and temperament such as energy level, ease in new social situations, etc.

At both sites, the importance of instrumental support emerges strongly, the need for wives to have access to knowledge and information. At Grant, it was clear that many wives were vague about military resources as well as the general community. At Winston, while more knowledgeable, many respondents were critical of the way information is disseminated. In both cases, the importance of teaching the new wife to find things, to get around, to seek assistance was emphasized; moreover, this should be done when she first moves to the post. At present, while many resources exist on both posts, there is no sure systematic way that the first term wife learns about them.

A final comment is in order. As a researcher, I was struck with the importance of instrumental support (basically information) as a way to improve the life of the first term wives. She needs to know where stores are located, where the hospital is, how to get on the list for post housing, how to find a baby sitter, etc. Eventually, most wives learn these things on their own; however, it would make life easier if they received this information soon after arrival on post. Ideally, a sponsor assigned to each new wife would be best; however, group meetings, tours, supplemented by literature is also effective. A number of respondents stressed that sending information indirectly through the husband is not a reliable method of communication. While most wives eventually learn their way around, their entry to the post and military life could be eased. It should finally be noted that their initial attitudes do affect their continuing perceptions and feelings about military life and the Army.



## ONE YEAR LATER: FOLLOW UP INTERVIEWS OF FIRST TERM WIVES

### METHODOLOGY

#### Sample

The initial research plan called for follow-up interviews of each of the 44 respondents in the original study. Wherever possible, we obtained names, addresses and telephone numbers of relatives or friends who would be likely to know the respondent's whereabouts in case she moved. (Usually, the "contact" person was the mother or parents of the respondent.) Consequently, about a year after the initial interview, we attempted to reach each respondent by telephone. The interval between initial and follow-up interviews ranged from ten to fifteen months but the average was about one year.

The success rate for the follow-up interviews is summed up in the table below:

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Original N</u>	<u># Reinterviews</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Fort Grant	24	17	71%
Fort Winston	20	17	85%
TOTAL	44	34	77%

The differences between the posts can be explained by two factors: several respondents at Fort Grant had not been willing to identify contacts and thus were impossible to trace after moving; in addition, there was generally a somewhat longer interval of time between the first and second interviews at Grant than at Winston so that more women had moved or changed other life circumstances.

Of the ten respondents who could not be reached for reinterview, seven had moved and had either not named a contact person or the person named was unreachable due to death, moving, a disconnected phone number, etc. One respondent had moved overseas and her relatives either could not or would not tell us her address or phone number. Finally, two women who apparently had not moved were unreachable despite repeated attempts to contact them.

### Reinterview Schedule

The follow up interview differs from the original interview in several respects: it is conducted by telephone; it is usually much briefer than the initial interview; it is less structured than the first interview; although similar content is included in each follow up, the questions are tailored to the particular respondent and, in some cases, we refer to responses in the initial interview. In general, however, the following content is included in each of the reinterviews:

1. Changes in life circumstances
  - a. Moves (to new post, OCONUS, within same area, etc).
  - b. Employment status
  - c. Family status (separation, divorce, new baby, pregnancy)
  - d. Husband's service (MOS, promotion, overseas duty, reenlistment, left service)
2. Changes in attitudes toward military life, reenlistment
3. Health
4. Finances
5. Friends
6. Major problems
  - a. Coping methods
  - b. Social support sources (friends, relatives, unit, military agencies, etc.)
7. Role of Army wife
8. Summary of life since original interview  
(life satisfaction, happiness, well being)

## LIFE EVENTS

Because of their youth and mobile life situations, we might expect these respondents to experience a number of life events in the period between interviews. This indeed proves to be the case. The major events are summed up below.

### 1. Moving

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents have experienced a change in residence during this period as the figures below indicate.

<u>Change in Residence</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
No change	11
Move within post	6
Move to post quarters	2
Move off-post	3
Move overseas	6
Living with relatives	4
Left Army	2

Among the eleven who have not moved, eight live in post quarters, one is in an off-post apartment and two are in mobile homes. All those who have moved within the post live in the same residential area at Fort Grant where apartments are undergoing renovation; all have moved to larger or better quarters. Similarly, of the three respondents who have changed residences off post, two have moved to larger quarters and one of these (in a mobile home) expects to move on post imminently. Of those who have gone overseas, three are living on the economy, two are in government housing and one is on her way overseas. There are four women currently living with relatives; in three cases, their marriages have broken up (either through divorce or separation) and the fourth respondent has just returned from Korea and is awaiting her husband's return and a new assignment.

We can see from these figures that moving is a usual experience for Army wives; in a few cases, respondents have experienced (or will experience) two moves during the interval between interviews. In most of these cases, the moves represent an improvement in their quality of life (i.e., larger and/or pleasanter living quarters) and in some cases, a financial benefit as they have moved to post quarters where their rent is fully covered. Finally, it should be pointed out that most of the ten respondents who could not be reached have moved; in fact, their move and our inability to obtain their new address is the reason they could not be reinterviewed. We can identify only one respondent occupying the same residence as the year before whom we could not reach. After numerous attempts, we concluded that she did not wish to be reinterviewed.

It should be noted that in addition to the four respondents currently living with relatives, an additional five were interviewed at the home of their parents or in-laws. Two were clearly in the midst of family visits; one was visiting from Germany and another was temporarily with her in-laws prior to moving overseas. The fifth respondent apparently has been on an extended visit to her mother (several months) and may or may not be returning to her husband (see below).

## 2. Family Status

As indicated above, three respondents whose marriages have dissolved are now living with relatives. In two cases, the couples have been divorced. The third respondent apparently has been deserted by her husband who left her with her family after a visit without money to return to their home. It is probable but not certain that the marriage is over. A fourth respondent indicates that her marriage is in serious trouble and that she is contemplating separation. Finally, one woman who could not be reached is now divorced, according to a former neighbor. And one respondent who was reached at her mother's home where she has been staying for several months claims that she wants to return to her husband but lacks the money; this is a marriage that seemed shaky during the first interview and it may be in process of dissolution. Thus, among the original 44 respondents, we can identify four broken marriages, one close to breaking up and a sixth that may be dissolving. Furthermore, it is possible that among the ten women we could not reach, there have been additional marital separations. As mentioned above, one such break-up was reported by a former neighbor; this was a marriage in serious trouble at the time of the first interview. On the positive side, several women report improvement in their marriages and these include one case in which the marriage seemed to be in jeopardy at the time of the first interview.

The second major change in family status is pregnancy or the birth of a baby. In the interval between interviews, eight babies were born, five respondents are now pregnant and one is expecting to adopt a child within a few weeks. For several of the women, this is a first baby or pregnancy, thus representing a major life change. Almost all are happy about the new or expected baby with only one respondent stating she has mixed feelings as she did not want a second child so soon. The respondent who is separated from her husband is expecting a baby shortly; even she has a positive attitude toward the new baby despite her marital problems.

### 3. Employment

At the time of the initial interview, most women were not employed and, among those who were working, babysitting in the home was the most usual type of work. At present, the employment picture is not very different as the table below illustrates.

<u>Employment Status</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Currently employed	
Full time	6
Part time	6
Not employed	22

Among those who are working part time, four are engaged in babysitting in their own homes (one is not accepting money but does sit on a regular basis of four hours a day). Furthermore, the job of one of the fully employed respondents consists in caring for an invalid as well as several foster children in her own home.

It should be pointed out that among the non-working respondents, five were employed until recently, four of them leaving because of a new baby or pregnancy. Of the 22 women currently not working, only six mention any plans or even desire to work in the foreseeable future. This result is probably explained by the earlier data on children indicating that fourteen respondents are either pregnant or have had babies recently (in the interval between interviews). This is a group of young mothers of infants, a group least likely to be on the labor market.

In terms of change in employment status since the first interview, the figures below summarize this.

<u>Employment Status Change</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Employed now (formerly not employed)	6*
Not employed (formerly employed)	3**
Employed for a while (now not emp.)	4
No change	21

\*This includes respondent who babysits without pay.

\*\*This includes one respondent who formerly ran a small day care center and now babysits for only one child.

Almost two-thirds show no change in work status since the first interview, i.e., if employed then, they are still working and if not employed, they are not working now. About one-third (10) who were not working at the time of the initial interview are either now employed (6) or have worked at least for a time during the interval (4). It should be noted that of the 21 whose status has remained stable, most (15) have not been employed at either time period.

To sum up, the majority of respondents are not employed at the time of the second interview (22). Of these, fifteen were not working at the time of the first interview, three were working and four have worked at some time during the interval.

### Summary of Life Events

The data above suggest a group that has undergone a considerable number of life events within a relatively short period (in many cases, less than a year). To sum up:

1. Three marriages have dissolved (two divorces and one separation).
2. Two husbands have left the Army. A third tried to leave but failed to find civilian employment.
3. Eight women have had babies in the interval between interviews; in two cases, these were first babies.
4. Six respondents are currently either pregnant or awaiting an adoption; two of these will be first children.
5. Five respondents are currently overseas; one has been overseas and is now back in the U. S. and a seventh is on her way to Japan.

The summary above identifies only major and easily observed life events. A number of respondents have moved, others describe changes in their lives in terms of marital relations, friendships, health, etc. Although employment status has remained stable for most respondents, a minority has shifted from work to non-work or vice-versa; moreover, a small group which was not employed at the time of either interview has worked during the interval. Finally, some employed women have changed jobs during this period. In general, we observe a group who are experiencing changes in a number of life domains and will be experiencing others in the near future (e.g., childbirth, moves overseas, to a new post or to civilian life, etc.). In the next section, we will examine attitude changes with regard to military life, husband's service and decisions to stay in or leave the Army.

## HUSBAND'S SERVICE

The major events with regard to husband's service involve promotions as well as career plans with regard to the Army.

Nearly half of the husbands (of those reinterviewed) have been promoted: fifteen have been promoted at least one rank and two more are on the promotion list.

The table below summarizes husbands' current plans with regard to retention in the Army.

<u>Reinlistment Plans</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Has reenlisted	4
Will reenlist (definitely or probably)	12
Will not reenlist	4
Don't know; not sure	11
Has left service	3

Nearly half have either reenlisted or intend to reenlist (either definitely or most likely). In one case, the soldier reenlisted reluctantly after failing to find a job in the civilian world. Three have already left the Army. Among those who left, one was chaptered out (according to his former wife) because of psychological difficulties; a second had to leave because of overweight (in this case, he had been dubious about staying at the time of the initial interview); and the third had always intended to leave in order to return to school. The four who do not intend to reenlist either want to be nearer home or never intended to stay in the Army. Finally, a sizeable group (approximately one-third of the respondents) simply cannot say whether their husbands will reenlist. Several of these indicate that it is entirely up to their husbands and they will go along with either decision while a few feel positive about the Army and would like him to reenlist. In several cases, retention depends upon obtaining certain training opportunities or a desired change in MOS. The most usual negative feeling cited by wives with regard to reenlistment (irrespective of husband's decision) is distance from home and family. Several wives explicitly state that they would support an Army career if they could be stationed nearer their families.

As observed in the initial interviews, most wives are moderately positive toward the Army and military life although few are enthusiastic. About nineteen of the 34 respondents express favorable feelings toward the Army but only one is

enthusiastic. On the other hand, few are very negative; some have mixed feelings while others, as indicated above, would like military life if they were not so far from their families.

#### ROLE OF THE MILITARY WIFE

In the initial interview, we asked several questions bearing on the respondent's perception of the role of the military wife: e.g., how is an enlisted man's wife supposed to act in general, toward people (and their wives) of different ranks. toward her husband? We found most women relatively unresponsive to these questions, indicating that they had no idea as to expected behavior or that they simply behaved as they usually did. In a substantial number of cases, there was explicit resentment at the idea of prescribed behavior, particularly across ranks. It was clear that the idea of an expected role violates certain norms of individuality and/or egalitarianism.

In the follow-up interview, we asked each respondent whether she had developed any ideas about expected behavior of an Army wife or changed any of her earlier opinions. As the table below indicates, the majority (26) show no change.

<u>Change in Perception of the Role of the Army Wife</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
No change	
No idea	3
Act anyway you want	5
Supportive, patient, understanding	9
Personal qualities (ladylike, good citizen, mind own business)	3
Cautious, respectful, don't show anger)	4
Miscellaneous	2
Total	26
Change	
Respectful, cautious	4
Supportive, patient	3
Act anyway you want	1
Total	8

Among those who show no change, almost one-third (8) either continue to have no perception of role or reject the idea of any prescribed behavior. The single largest group (9) emphasize



support and patience toward one's husband and the remainder stress either personal qualities or respectfulness, usually with regard to higher ranks. Among the "changers," most had no idea of role in the initial interview and now stress either support and understanding of one's husband or respect toward people of higher rank. These results suggest that, even after some experience living in a military community, the enlisted man's wife continues to lack a strong or clear perception of the role of military wife. Where such perception exists, it tends to take the form of attitudes toward the soldier spouse, such as support and understanding of his work conditions and problems.

#### MAJOR PROBLEMS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

In the reinterviews, about 40% of the respondents report major problems; this compares with over 50% of the original sample who described serious or moderate problems in their lives. The type of problems now described are summed up below:

<u>Type of Problem</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Financial	7
Marital	4
Housing	1
Distance from family	1
Health (child)	1
Traumatic event	1
No major problems	20

At the time of the first interview, most respondents sought social support from husband, friends, family; few looked to military for help with problems. After an interval of close to a year, this has changed. While husband and family are still important sources of help, the unit, military agencies and current friends and neighbors are increasingly cited. The table below identifies sources of support, either received or perceived (i.e., experienced support or perception that it is available and will be used if needed).

<u>Social Support</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Husband	15
Family	12
Friends	
Old friends	1
Current friends & neighbors	12
Unit	
NCO, Commander, colleagues	10
Unit wives	7
Military agencies or personnel (e.g., ACS, JAG, Chaplain)	7
Church	2
Work colleagues	2
No one	1

We can see that military sources of support are quite prominent; a total of seventeen respondents perceive the unit as a source of support, either from unit personnel or their wives. An additional seven women have received help from military agencies or personnel such as the Chaplain or a psychiatrist. These "official" sources tend to be utilized when there is severe problem such as a marital or financial crisis. Moreover, current friends and neighbors are almost always other Army wives. In summary, we can conclude that with time, young Army wives do develop support networks in the military community but continue to rely on their families as well.

#### SATISFACTION AND WELL BEING

The final question on the reinterview asked each respondent to sum up her life since the initial interview; in some cases, it was already clear what direction this summation would take. The table below shows the responses to this question in terms of changes in general well being during the interval between interviews.

<u>Changes in Life Satisfaction</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Better (life has improved; problems solved, R is happier, etc.)	16
Same; no change	10
Worse	2
Not clear (life is chaotic; up & down)	6

It should be pointed out that those who report "no change" were generally at least moderately satisfied at the time of the first interview and a few had expressed great satisfaction with their lives. Thus, over two-thirds (26 of the 34 respondents) consider their lives either improved or continually satisfactory. The reasons cited for the improvement in their lives are listed below.

<u>Reason for Improved Well Being</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
New baby or pregnancy	4
Overseas experience	4
Developing friendships	3
Better marital relationship	3
Move to new residence	2
Employment	2
Improved health	1
Improved finances	1
Leaving Army	1
Greater responsibility	1
Greater independence	1

It is noteworthy that of the five respondents who are now overseas or who were overseas during the interval between interviews, four clearly enjoy the experience and cite it as a major reason for feeling happier. The other major reasons for improved well being include motherhood, development of friendships and improved marital relationships. In at least one case, developing a close friendship with another Army wife has apparently transformed the respondent's life as she has moved from apathy to activity and in the process has developed both a better relationship with her husband and a more positive attitude toward the Army and military life.

The minority who describe their lives as either worse or up and down cite such factors as marital stress or breakup (2); specific traumatic event (robbery); overseas experience; and in one case, leaving the Army which has resulted in a chaotic transition with regard to residence, finances and employment. In a few cases, women who are now dissatisfied with their lives for a particular reason (e.g., traumatic event) were equally unhappy at the time of the first interview but at that time cited an entirely different factor as the cause of their unhappiness. This suggests that certain individuals may be chronically dissatisfied with their lives and attribute this to different objective factors when, in fact, it is a personality characteristic. However, our data are insufficient for testing or supporting this generalization.

## SUMMARY

The major results of the reinterviews are summarized below. It should be emphasized that these generalizations apply only to those respondents we were able to reinterview. However, it is difficult to identify any common factor among the respondents we could not reach that might bias the results that are described here.

1. As indicated earlier, these respondents represent a group that has experienced a number of life events in a relatively short period. Changes in residence, marital and family status, employment and husband's service have all occurred.

2. Attitudes toward the Army and military life do not show much change. Most respondents on reinterview are moderately positive toward the military but few show much enthusiasm. Most either favor reenlistment or feel it is the husband's decision. In a number of cases, reenlistment apparently depends on certain circumstances such as changing MOS, entering a training program, assignment nearer home and family, etc.

3. Despite longer experience in the military community, the role of the Army wife continues to be unclear to most wives. Where they are responsive to this concept, they tend to answer in terms of attitude and behavior toward their husbands, i.e., support, understanding and patience.

4. During the initial interview, most respondents tended to be optimistic, feeling that their lives would improve and that certain problems would be solved. This optimism apparently was justified. A smaller proportion now describe serious problems; finances represent the most frequently cited problem. Most of the life events described above have had positive effects: the birth of a baby, pregnancy, moving to a new residence almost always result in greater satisfaction. It is noteworthy that with one exception, all the women who are or have been overseas enjoy the experience, in some cases manifesting considerable enthusiasm. Almost half of the husbands have been promoted, resulting in improved finances. Finally, several respondents describe themselves as happier because of improved marital relations and the development of friendships in the community. Nearly half of the respondents describe their lives as better since the first interview. Among the remainder, most were fairly happy at the initial interview and say little has changed. Where women describe their lives as less satisfactory or up and down, they tend to be undergoing stress due to a specific life event such as marital disruption, financial stress, etc.

5. In terms of social support, although respondents still rely considerably on husband and family, they are more likely to identify current friends and neighbors as well as unit personnel

and spouses as sources of support. Formal military support agencies and personnel are most likely to be used in cases of crises or severe problems. Generally, respondents are more knowledgeable about these support facilities than at the initial interview, whether or not they have actually used them.

6. Finally, most respondents seem to be coping adequately with military life. Many explicitly state that they had to get used to certain things, to develop patience and understanding about the demands on their husbands, to learn their way around, etc. Experience as well as positive life events have contributed to general adaptation and improved quality of life in most cases.